

King sends cables to Algerian president-elect, Assad

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Friday sent a cable to the president-elect of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, congratulating him on winning the presidential elections held on Thursday. King Abdullah said Jordan looks forward to strengthening bilateral ties with Algeria. Also on Friday, King Abdullah sent a cable to Syrian President Hafez Assad congratulating him on Syria's independence day. The King wished Assad continued health and the Syrian people further progress and development.

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Hizbollah vows to avenge Israeli occupation of Lebanese village

BEIRUT (AFP) — Israel's occupation of a village in southern Lebanon drew angry threats of revenge from Hizbollah guerrillas on Friday while the government protested over the action to an international truce committee.

Hizbollah politburo chief Mohammad Raad, also a member of the Lebanese parliament, warned that the Shiite Muslim movement would teach "the enemy an unforgettable lesson."

Israeli troops and the allied South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia which moved in to Amoun on Thursday were fortifying the almost-deserted village Friday as the Israeli army warned against attempts to impede the operation.

Dozens of Israeli soldiers and SLA militiamen backed by bulldozers, tractors and trucks worked through the night erecting barbed wire barricades, digging trenches and placing obstacles on roads to Amoun, which has become a symbol of resistance against Israel's 21-year occupation of Lebanon.

Lebanon filed two complaints with the international committee monitoring an April 1996 truce accord over the Amoun seizure and the injury of a cameraman by Israeli army fire.

The government charged that Israel violated the terms of the agreement under which the Jewish state and Lebanese guerrillas committed to spare civilians.

Kassem Dargham, a Lebanese cameraman working for Abu Dhabi TV, was slightly wounded by a rubber-coated metal bullet fired Friday by Israeli troops at journalists at the entrance of Amoun, which lies just north of the Israeli-occupied border zone.

Raad said Israel's action was "a clear and scandalous aggression" and a violation of the ceasefire agreement.

"The resistance will respond to this aggression according to its programme, its own timing and the place where it will be most painful for the enemy and where it will exert more pressure to force its retreat not just from Amoun, but also from all the region it occupies in southern Lebanon," he said.

Raad said Israel was "trying to change tactics" because of mounting Israeli casualties from Hizbollah attacks.

"But annexing Amoun, erecting barricades and digging trenches will not prevent us from pursuing resistance operations which... exert pressure on the enemy to force it to withdraw from our land unconditionally," he added.

The Israeli army warned it would respond firmly to any Lebanese attempt to impede its operation in Amoun, which once had a population of around 7,000 but is now home to only around 100 people.

"This preventive security operation was carried out in Amoun... following repeated infiltrations of the village by



An elderly couple walks on Friday through barbed wire and rubble to cross out of the southern Lebanese village of Amoun. Israeli troops and their allies in the South Lebanon Army sent bulldozers to clear the entrance of the village before occupying it late on Thursday (AFP photo)

Hizbollah terrorists and the planting of bombs in the area," the army said in a statement.

One Israeli soldier was killed and several wounded Monday in a bomb attack claimed by Hizbollah near Beaufort Castle — an 11th century fort overlooking Amoun and which is Israel's largest military post in the zone.

The SLA said it was setting up a new position in Amoun to "prevent the infiltration of terrorists into the village and then

into the security zone."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the move was a new policy of responding strongly to attacks on Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, where more than 1,200 Israelis have died since Israel first invaded the country in 1978.

Lebanon's permanent representative to the United Nations has been told to send a message to U.N. chief Kofi Annan to seek a halt to the "dangerous" invasion.

France, a member of the truce committee, meanwhile expressed disappointment with Israel's action. "We hope that all measures will be taken to ease the tension," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Anne Gazeau-Serret.

The Israeli army occupied Amoun briefly in February, surrounding it with barbed wire to prevent the entry of guerrillas, but Lebanese demonstrators ripped down the barriers.

Prince Hassan named chairman of intellectual property body commission

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Policy Advisory Commission of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) on Thursday elected HRH Prince Hassan as its chairman in its first meeting held in Geneva.

The commission was established by the organisation with the aim of benefiting from the views of its members, prominent international figures with experience on the impact of the application of intellectual property rights on the economies and development process of developing countries.

Members represent all regions of the world and include experts, officials, ministers and former presidents of the Philippines and Tanzania. The organisation offers technical and financial support to member countries.

In his address to the inaugural session, which he chaired, Prince Hassan, a founding member of the commission, said the advisory group will "help WIPO in setting future policies which would enhance global economic growth and wealth creation by sharing the views of individuals from the different regions of the world on economic, social and political matters pertaining to intellectual property protection."

"From administering intellectual property treaties to providing member countries with technical assistance, financial support and legislative experience, WIPO continues to be one of the most active U.N. bodies in fulfilling its purposes and tasks," he said.

He noted that the concept of intellectual property protection is new to the developing world, and as such, many of its countries faced political, economic, cultural and social obstacles in adapting their laws to conform with the WTO-TRIP (trade related aspects of intellectual property) agreement.

"Without WIPO's assistance in clarifying various aspects of TRIPs and offering its expertise and support, those countries would have wasted precious time, effort and money in trying to maximise the benefits of acceding to the TRIPs agreement."

Prince Hassan also stressed that the legitimate interests of property owners and the economic growth element should be taken into consideration "while adhering to the traditional concepts underpinning the intellectual property doctrine, i.e., ownership, rights, social and public benefits, creativity and novelty."

Jordan, which is seeking to join the World Trade Organisation (WTO), is under pressure to enforce its intellectual

property rights laws as one of the major prerequisites to WTO membership.

Looking at globalisation as a doctrine which takes into consideration the political, social, economic and cultural differences between the various countries and regions of the world, Prince Hassan told the commission that such a comprehensive concept of globalisation "should include humanitarian and human rights elements which go hand in hand with economic development."

"In this regard, the global intellectual property regime has to establish a balance between what is a right for the intellectual property owner and the rights of other beneficiaries of intellectual property whether on the local or the international levels. The local public and the international community should be the eventual recipients of the fruits of intellectual property. They ought not to be harmed by illegitimate restrictive practices which take or may take place in the realm of intellectual property protection."

The United States Trade Representative Office has put Jordan on a Special 301 Watch List for having what it considers inadequate intellectual property protection.

(Continued on page 2)

'Sexual assault charges dropped against former minister'

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — A controversial rape case brought against a former minister by his Filipina domestic helper took a new twist on Thursday when the plaintiff retracted her charges, judicial sources told the Jordan Times on Friday.

"The Philippines national has backtracked on her previous accusations and, therefore, the case was dropped," said one source.

The source gave no further details. Nor did he divulge whether the plaintiff would face legal prosecution for "misleading justice."

Unconfirmed reports revealed, however, that the

plaintiff dropped the case after having received JD20,000 in an out-of-court settlement.

But sources close to the former minister refuted those reports and stressed that no financial settlement has been reached.

"We never paid a single penny," said one source, who requested anonymity.

He added that the former minister returned home from a trip abroad as "soon as he heard the news."

"He is back in Jordan and ready to testify if the police decided to summon him," the source told the Jordan Times.

Former ministers do not enjoy political immunity.

The Filipina helper, in her late thirties, had filed an unprecedented suit against the former official accusing him of raping her on April 1 at his residence.

The Philippines embassy in Amman followed up on the helper's case but declined any public comment since the charges were filed on April 10.

In her initial statement, the plaintiff charged that the former minister took advantage of his family's absence and sexually assaulted her.

She told police then that he "must have put a certain substance in my tea cup which made me dizzy with a heavy head."

The sources close to the

former minister refuted press reports that he "fled" the country for fear of being convicted in the rape case.

"This is not true. The official left Amman on April 6 and we all bid him farewell, four days before the charges were levelled," the source explained.

According to the same source, the domestic helper took up "a two-week temporary" mission at the former official's residence on March 31.

"I never saw her before then, and we do not know her whereabouts now," he said. "She is a complete stranger, and we really do not know the reasons behind her false accusations."

Clinton letter will help Arafat to delay announcement of state, official says

RAMALLAH (AFP) — U.S. President Bill Clinton will soon send a letter to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat making the most explicit statement yet of U.S. recognition of the Palestinians' right to self-determination, a senior official said on Friday.

But the letter, designed to encourage Arafat to postpone a planned unilateral proclamation of Palestinian independence in May, will fall short of the kind of clear recognition of their right to statehood made by European leaders last month.

"This letter comes within the framework of steps agreed

upon in the Washington summit meeting between Arafat and Clinton on March 23," a senior Palestinian official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The Clinton letter is due to be delivered to Arafat ahead of a series of meetings of the Palestinian leadership in late April when a final decision will be taken on whether to declare a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on May 4, when a five-year interim period set down in the Oslo peace accords with Israel ends.

Clinton's message will not contain a direct request for Palestinian leaders to announce a delay in their statehood proclamation, he said.

But the message will be intended "to bolster Arafat's position to take this decision, especially since he faces a strong current of opinion within the ranks of the PLO Central Council that he should go ahead and announce a state on May 4," the official said.

Several Palestinian newspapers carried an article last week by Ahmad Qureia, the speaker of the Palestinian legislature and a long-time Arafat advisor, in which he urged Arafat not to postpone the announcement of a state. Senior figures in Arafat's own Fatah faction

have also urged him to stick to the May 4 deadline.

The Palestinian side has been asking that the U.S. position set out in the letter should be "Gaza plus," the official said, referring to the formula used by Clinton when he made a historic visit to the Gaza Strip in December.

Clinton affirmed then that the Palestinian people were ready to "determine their own destiny on their own land."

"The Palestinians want the U.S. position in the letter to be more than the expressions used in Gaza but [they will accept] less than an explicit recognition of a state," the official said.

NATO continues strikes as thousands leave Kosovo

Kosovo could be emptied soon, UNHCR says; NATO sheds little light on convoy attack

Agencies

THOUSANDS OF ethnic Albanian refugees poured out of Kosovo in a renewed exodus on Friday as NATO vowed to pursue air strikes against Yugoslavia and tried to put behind it the deaths of civilians in a convoy bombed on Wednesday.

Yugoslavia's official news agency Tanjug said NATO had carried out about 25 strikes on targets around the Kosovo provincial capital Pristina on Friday evening, including the airport at Statina and the nearby town of Lipjane.

Serb media said on Friday two NATO planes had been shot down over Montenegro on Thursday and another had crashed in Bosnia overnight.

Tanjug said the Yugoslav air defence force had shot down two NATO aircraft and a missile during Thursday's NATO attacks over the Montenegrin capital Podgorica.

"The planes had been active over the region of Podgorica on Thursday night," Tanjug said, quoting a statement from the Second Yugoslav Army information service in Montenegro.

"In those attacks about 20 [NATO] missiles were fired and caused huge material damage. The security forces are searching intensively for the pilots of the downed aircraft," it said.

Separately, Serbian state radio said a NATO plane had crashed over neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Republika Spska.

In Geneva, the United Nations refugee agency said Yugoslavia had resumed mass expulsions of ethnic Albanians "with full force" and seemed intent on driving all of them out of Kosovo.

The spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Kris Janowski, said at least 12,000 people had streamed out of the Serbian province into Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro in the space of 24 hours from Thursday to Friday morning.

"A couple of months ago it would have seemed unbelievable to the civilised world that the Serbs would actually expel the entire civilian population but this seems to be reality now," Janowski added. "The brutality of the expulsions as well as the scale of the expulsions is

picking up."

Many of the refugees pouring into enter neighbouring countries had not had a meal in days, the World Food Programme (WFP) spokeswoman Christiane Berthiaume said.

"This is the first time we're seeing refugees in such a lamentable condition, extremely weakened by lack of food," Berthiaume said.

France, meanwhile, said it planned to air-drop food and medicine to ethnic Albanians still inside Kosovo, making the announcement after President Jacques Chirac had met some 20 private groups trying to help Kosovo refugees.

In Washington, the U.S. State Department said it had fresh evidence of mass killings in Kosovo and the destruction or damaging of more than 400 villages there by the forces of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

State Department spokesman James Rubin said this could explain why the flow of ethnic Albanians from Kosovo had recently increased.

At the Yugoslav-Macedonian border a train disgorged some 3,000 ethnic Albanians on Fri-

Refugee numbers in Kosovo crisis

LONDON (R) — Here is a list of numbers in the Kosovo refugee crisis from governments and international organisations:

Population of Kosovo: 1,956,196 (1991 census)

Ethnic Albanians in Kosovo: more than 1,800,000 (unofficial estimate)

Displaced from Kosovo homes in past year: 960,000 (NATO, Friday)

Fled or expelled from Kosovo since NATO began air attacks on Yugoslavia on March 24: 534,200 (UNHCR, Thursday)

Fled or expelled from Kosovo since fighting began in March 1998: 700,000 (UNHCR, Friday)

Surrounding countries with substantial refugee numbers:

In Albania: 318,000 (UNHCR, Thursday)

In Macedonia: almost 130,000 (Macedonian interior minister, Friday)

In Montenegro: 63,200 (UNHCR, Friday)

In Bosnia: 31,500 including Yugoslav Muslims (UNHCR, Thursday)

In Turkey: 10,291 (Turkey, Wednesday)

In Croatia: 5,000 to 6,000 (UNHCR, Sunday)

In Bulgaria: 2,300 (UNHCR, Sunday)

They walked past minefields through a no-man's land where some 45,000 earlier refugees were stuck for days as Macedonia hesitated to let them in.

Nearly 5,000 refugees poured into Albania from Kosovo and many more were expected as shelling continued further north along the border with Yugoslavia, international observers said.

(Continued on page 2)

On the occasion of
Al-Hijra Year
Arab Bank is honoured to convey to
His Majesty
King Abdullah Bin Al-Hussein
and to the Arab and Islamic nations
its felicitations and best wishes



ARAB BANK

Jordan moving towards greater political, civic openness — Rawabdeh

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh has said that Jordan is going through a transitional phase and is heading towards a new era which will witness greater openness towards political parties and civil institutions.

Rawabdeh was also quoted as saying in an interview with the Abu Dhabi newspaper Al Bayan, published on Thursday, that Jordan maintains close ties with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), but denied reports that Jordan is seeking membership in the GCC. The premier stressed that the issue was never discussed by Jordan or Saudi Arabia.

Rawabdeh, who accompanied His Majesty King Abdullah on his trip to the Gulf states, said Jordan's relations with the GCC

entered a crisis following Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, but he noted that efforts to restore normal relations began under the late King Hussein and have been followed up by King Abdullah.

"We are building strong ties with the Arab Gulf states, but such a move will by no means be at the expense of Jordan's relations with other Arab countries, as King Abdullah has explicitly stated," said Rawabdeh, emphasising that Jordan is opening up to the whole Arab World and will not accept any interference in its internal affairs, as it does not intend to interfere in other countries' affairs. Replying to a question on whether he preferred that his government be backed by a political party, Rawabdeh said: "At the moment I believe that no

single party constitutes a majority in Parliament. It is better for a prime minister to be neutral in order to be able to play the role of an arbitrator between political parties by opening up to all of them, without being committed to a particular party."

"What gives guarantees and credibility to any government in Jordan is its achievements, and I believe that political parties in Jordan and the other parts of the Arab region have not yet become sufficiently deep-rooted and have not reached a stage at which they can assume a real parliamentary majority to rule within a true democratic system," said Rawabdeh.

In reply to a question on whether Jordan still faces threats with regard to what has been dubbed as "substitute homeland" for the

Palestinians, Rawabdeh said: "Israel has long-term objectives across a wide area of the Arab World stretching from the Euphrates to the Nile, but this does not intimidate Jordan, which is a well-established nation determined to confront all types of conspiracies."

Asked to assess Jordan's ties with Syria, Rawabdeh said: "I declared in my government statement to Parliament that we intend to strengthen our ties with neighbouring Arab countries, including Syria, which we hope to have very strong ties."

In reply to a question on whether he intends to visit Baghdad, the prime minister said: "There is nothing preventing such a visit, but at the moment there is no reason to justify it."



PRAYING IN ON CONFISCATED LAND: Palestinian protesters perform Friday prayer on their confiscated land seized by Israeli settlers to expand the Jewish settlement of Morag near Rafah on Friday. Hundreds of Palestinians gathered at the site to protest against the Israeli official settlement policy and to demand the return of their land which settlers had attempted to seize two days before (AFP photo)

Sudan peace talks scheduled to resume in Nairobi next week

NAIROBI (AFP) — Peace talks between Sudan's Islamic junta and rebels from the mainly black south are scheduled to resume in the Kenyan capital Nairobi next week, Kenyan officials said on Friday.

The negotiations, under the auspices of the regional Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), are expected to open on Tuesday and end on April 25.

Kenya is the chair of IGAD's ministerial committee on the peace process in southern Sudan. Other committee members are Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda.

The civil war between the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudanese government is Africa's longest, with the latest round lasting for 15 years, and the death toll since 1983 estimated at more than a million people.

The SPLA is demanding greater autonomy for the largely Christian and animist black south from the Islamic and Arabic north.

The talks will resume amid a dispute between the SPLA and the Khartoum regime over the extension of a ceasefire aimed at allowing aid agencies to cope with the effects of last year's devastating famine in southern Sudan.

A three-month extension of the truce announced in January expired on Thursday and Khartoum announced that it observes a comprehensive ceasefire in all parts of the south from Thursday on condition that the SPLA agrees

to the wider truce.

The SPLA for its part said on Sunday that it will extend for a further three months the ceasefire in Bahr Al Ghazal, the province worst hit by the famine, but rejected the government offer of a comprehensive truce.

"[President Omar] Al Bashir's declaration of a meaningless 'comprehensive ceasefire' is actually a ploy intended to kill the humanitarian ceasefire," the SPLA said in a statement.

"There is therefore no situation of a comprehensive ceasefire for the SPLA to respond to," it added, that a comprehensive truce would be part and parcel of the overall political solution to the war in southern Sudan and would be discussed at the peace talks on April 20-25.

Prince Hassan named chairman of commission

(Continued from page 1)

Emphasising how today's advanced world trading system gives developing countries no choice but to enforce intellectual property rights to strengthen their own economies, Prince Hassan said the question of whether to enforce these rights or not is no longer valid. "The issue at hand is how to do it without short-term suffering. There must be comprehensive international cooperation. Developed countries must compensate and help to alleviate the negative socio-economic impacts developing countries would endure."

"The high cost of obtaining new software technology and 'know-how' together with counterfeiting of copyrights and trademarks as well as stress on the pharmaceutical industry will be and are being encountered by developing countries."

In Jordan many pharmaceutical companies manufacture drugs without licences, and an estimated 85 per cent of all software packages sold in the Kingdom are pirated.

Prince Hassan added that there are the problems of the costs of textbooks, software for students, of governments establishing domestic offices and agencies of training of personnel, and other problems.

But he added "we must be positive. We must think of a more active flow of foreign investment, higher quality products for consumers, the enhancement of specific exports and avoidance of trade sanctions."

He said individuals and institutions must be given the opportunity to promote research and development. That way, he added, "the appreciation of creative efforts will, in return, stimulate creativity and innovation thus

reaching a higher level of ethics. Innovative companies will have the opportunity to enter the marketplace giving them the opportunity to compete with the larger established companies."

Also Thursday, Prince Hassan visited the head office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in his capacity as member of the organisation's consultative committee.

He urged UNHCR Commissioner General Sadako Ogata to provide essential aid to the refugees of the Kosovo crisis. He pointed out the role that can be played by the Muslim World in providing aid to the refugees through an international Zakat fund, which Prince Hassan has advocated for the benefit of victims of conflicts and natural disasters.

Ogata, who briefed the Prince on the organisation's plans to secure relief supplies

and essential services to ethnic Albanian refugees until they are able to return to their homes, said the UNHCR will support Prince Hassan's Zakat fund proposal and follow it up with the various world relief organisations. Prince Hassan had earlier submitted the proposal to the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

In a press statement, the Prince warned against the consequences of ethnic cleansing and sectarian violence.

Prince Hassan said Jordan has provided relief aid to Kosovo refugees through the Hashemite Charity Organisation and noted that Her Majesty Queen Rania and other Royal family members visited the refugees to show the Kingdom's solidarity with and support for victims of war.

Prince Hassan returned home from his two-day visit to Geneva on Friday afternoon.

IATA conference to open next month

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Jordanian next month will host the 1999 Inflight Management Conference for the International Air Transport Association (IATA), Sumar Majali, RJ vice president of passenger services has said.

The conference will discuss airline alliances and their impact on inflight services.

"During the conference there will be an interactive breakout sessions which will encourage delegates to identify and discuss the most appropriate strategies of inflight professionals to adopt in order to insure the highest possible profile in alliance discussion," he told the Jordan Times, on Wednesday.

"Participants will also learn about the techniques that help provide consistent inflight service standards and gain an understanding of passenger expectations of the concept of seamless travel," said Majali. HRH Prince Faisal will address the opening session of the conference which is scheduled to take place on May 5, said Majali.

The conference will also discuss on-board emergencies, faced by flight crews, he added. It will also talk about the impact of time zone differences on the crew, Majali said.

NATO continues strikes as thousands leave Kosovo

(Continued from page 1)

Serb forces have been bombing Albanian border posts and villages, apparently in an attempt to destroy sites used by the Kosovo Liberation Army to support its guerrillas fighting across the frontier in Kosovo.

NATO officials at a regular news conference in Brussels shed little new light on who was responsible for the killing of more than 60 ethnic Albanians on a road in Kosovo.

The alliance continued to reject responsibility for the bombing of more than one convoy of Albanian refugees on Wednesday.

"We don't accept any blame

for any other incident," chief spokesman Jamie Shea said.

But despite this assertion, Shea acknowledged that NATO was still investigating the results of the air strikes it carried out in southwestern Kosovo.

"When we have all the facts established, we will provide all the information," he insisted, urging journalists to turn their attention to the "real story" of the Serb security forces burning out villages.

Serbian sources allege that NATO bombers hit two separate convoys of refugees, one to the south of the town of Djakovica and one to the north, killing at least 75 people.

Western journalists have reported seeing scores of mutilated bodies at both sites.

NATO appears to be accepting responsibility for the incident to the north of the town. But its account of what actually happened has raised as many questions as it has answered.

Military spokesman Guiseppe Marani acknowledged that the single "civilian vehicle" it admitted to having hit was "probably a tractor."

He did not add that the tractor was towing a trailer packed with refugees, as diplomats said NATO's top commander U.S. General Wesley Clark had told Alliance ambassadors on Thursday.

On Friday the Alliance said its planes had notched up "one of the best nights thus far" in their 24-day-old campaign of trying to bomb Milosevic into withdrawing from Kosovo.

Serb media said 24 people were injured in NATO's overnight attack on the Belgrade industrial suburb of Pancevo which hit an oil refinery, petrochemical facility and nitrogen plant.

At Novi Sad, Serbia's second city, a refinery was hit for the fourth time Thursday, struck by four missiles setting off a fire at the plant, Tanjug said.

The agency said a bridge linking the towns of Smederevo and Kovin southeast of Bel-

grade was hit, the fifth Danube crossing to be targeted since NATO air strikes began on Yugoslavia on March 24.

Tanjug also said three NATO missiles landed early Friday on a camp for Serb refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina in Paracin, south of Belgrade but NATO denied the report.

Serb authorities, who describe virtually all NATO attacks as being aimed at civilian areas, claim 500 civilians have been killed and more than 4,000 hurt in the course of bombing campaign.

The president of the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro, Milo Djukanovic, said the conflict was getting out of control and could sweep through

the rest of the Balkans.

Djukanovic, who has tried to maintain a neutral stance, played down fears of a military coup in his small republic but told the Yugoslav army to stop interfering in internal politics.

Meanwhile, Serbian President Milan Milutinovic and Kosovo Albanian moderate leader Ibrahim Rugova met in Belgrade to agree that a halt to NATO bombings was a condition for relaunching political talks, Tanjug said.

A statement issued after the meeting said "it was jointly concluded that a halt to the bombing of our country is a condition without which the political process cannot be fully realised, because victims are equally all citizens of Kosovo."

vo, regardless of their ethnic or religious origin, whether Serbs or Albanians."

Pentagon officials said on Friday the United States was considering calling up 33,000 reservists and National Guard troops.

British Defence Secretary George Robertson left open the option of deploying NATO ground troops in Kosovo while stressing that the alliance was pinning its hopes on air strikes.

"We continue to believe that the air campaign should force [Milosevic] to meet our demands," Robertson said in a speech prepared for delivery on Friday in the United States. "At the same time we must keep our plans for ground forces under review."

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Cartoon — The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends
18:30 ...Mirror, Mirror
19:00 ...Le Journal
19:15 ...French Programme
19:30 ...News headlines
19:35 ...French Programmes
20:00 ...Today's Health
20:30 ...The Pretender
21:15 ...Ancient Civilizations
22:00 ...News in English
22:20 ...Feature film — Jesse James
23:59 ...End of T.V.

PRAYER TIMES

03:39 ...Fajr
05:01 ...Sunrise
11:35 ...Dhuhr
15:12 ...Asr
18:10 ...Maghreb
19:31 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifheh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932

St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138

Church of Presentation, Sweifheh Tel. 5920146

The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190

Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679

The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331

The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 24 Aqaba 32. Humidity readings: Amman 21 per cent, Aqaba 18 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun ...08/22

Jerash ...12/26

Um Qays ...13/27

Madaba ...13/26

Petra ...11/29

Dead Sea ...16/32

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Afif Shukri ...489863

Dr. Khalil Ramadan ...5358723

Dr. Nidal Dahleh ...5827195

Dr. Sa'ad Bawliq ...4788285

AMMAN:

Firas Pharmacy ...5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730

Mayalah Pharmacy ...5537004

Raka Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:

Dr. Issam Al Salih ...021246858

Fou'ad Pharmacy ...021275360

ZARQA:

Dr. Rafiq Atallah ...051994424

PALESTINE PHARMACY (05)983562

The Islamic, Abdl ...5666131/7

Husseini Medical Centre ...5856856

Luzmila ...4630195

Khatid Maternity ...4644281/6

Aklid Maternity ...4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity ...4642362

Malhas, J. Amman ...4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani ...5607071

Shmeisani Hospital ...5607431

Jordan Hospital ...5607550

University Hospital ...5353444

Al-Mushar Hospital ...5667277/9

Al-Ahli, Abdl ...5664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhsin ...4771013/5

Al-Bashir ...4775111/26

Army, Marka ...4891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital ...5157100

Amal Hospital ...5607155

Al Amal Cancer Centre ...5353000

Jerusalem Hospital ...4387181

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital

Zarqa National Hospital

Ibn Sina Hospital ...091986731

Al Hikma Modern Hospital ...091990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital

Ronsan Catholic Hospital

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital

Rosary Sisters Hospital

Speciality Hospital ...0217103100

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ...5921199

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre ...4637111

Civil Defence Department ...5661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue ...4630341

Civil Defence Emergency ...199

Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777

Fire Brigade ...4617101

Blood Bank ...4775121

Highway Police ...5343402

Traffic Police ...4896390

Public Security Dept ...4630321

Hotel Complaints ...5605800

Price Complaints ...5661176

Water & Sewage Complaints ...489467

Amman Municipality Complaints ...787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) ...121

Overseas Calls ...0132

Central Amman Telephone Repairs ...4623101

Abdali Tel. Repairs ...5661101

Jordan Television ...4773111

Radio Jordan ...4774111

Water Authority ...5680100

J. Electricity Authority 5815615

Electric Power Co. ...4636381

RJ Flight Information 44-53300

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PALESTINE PHARMACY (05)983562

The Islamic, Abdl ...5666131/7

Husseini Medical Centre ...5856856

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Khatid Maternity ...4644281/6

Aklid Maternity ...4642441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity ...4642362

Malhas, J. Amman ...4636140

Palestine, Shmeisani ...5607071

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19:00 ...Frankfurt (RJ)

19:35 ...Rome (RJ)

21:30 ...Paris (add) (RJ)

23:59 ...Brussels, Vienna (add) (RJ)

00:15 ...Larnaca (RJ)

00:45 ...Paris (RJ)

06:15 ...Bangkok, Doha (RJ)

Other Flights

11:15 ...Sanaa (IY)

12:30 ...Riyadh (SV)

13:10 ...Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)

13:10 ...Milan (AZ)

14:00 ...Vienna (OS)

Erasing fear and shame is key component to identifying and fighting child abuse

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — The Department for International Development, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development, held a workshop on child abuse and stressed the necessity to develop professional skills in the detection, reporting and management of the physical and sexual abuse of children in Jordan.

The workshop was conducted on Thursday by three senior lecturers on child health at the Liverpool John Moores University, in Liverpool, England, who emphasized that professional institutes working with abused children must adopt a preventive rather than reactive policy to deal with child abuse.

The workshop focused on key issues including: how to diagnose injuries, the difference between discipline and child abuse, recognising signs of abuse and behaviors that may indicate abuse, and how to respond and take action.

"We have accomplished the first stage, which is admitting that there are abusive physical and psychological patterns (in Jordan)," said Mo'een Hadidi, director of the National Institute for Forensic Medi-

cine. "Now we have to move on and study the various methods to deal with this problem."

Hadidi also stressed that the officially reported cases of child abuse are not representative of the actual cases. Experts dealing with child abuse say that the abused are very unlikely to report such cases, especially when it is of a sexual nature, mainly because they are either afraid or ashamed to talk about their ordeal.

Experts say they cannot determine, from available statistics, whether abuse cases have been increasing or are only more often reported.

"We live in a society where talking about (sexual) abuse is a taboo. Women are embarrassed to discuss this issue," said Captain Omayya Hourani, who works with the Family Protection Unit at the Public Security Department.

"To deal with this problem, we need to start with educating children in schools and teach them not to be embarrassed to talk about abuse that is inflicted upon them."

Experts also found that most cases of abuse are sexual, and that females form the majority of the victims. Some experts

even say there is a correlation between sexual abuse and the increasing number of prostitutes in Jordan.

Lina Wardam, lecturer and clinical nurse at the University of Jordan, began working with abuse victims in 1984, a time when such cases were "hidden under the carpet."

"I started working in support groups with students from different faculties, where I found that seven of them were victims of abuse," said Wardam. "Five of them were abused sexually."

Sexual abuse is most likely to be inflicted by a relative of the victim like a father, a brother or a husband, Wardam says that victims find extreme difficulty in their marriages and they, in turn, are very likely to abuse their children.

"We live in a society where people find it hard to believe that a woman can be abused by her father or brother," said Wardam. "We often deal with women who either abused or neglected their children, because they were victims themselves."

Wardam also says abuse is more likely to occur in certain social conditions.

"Crowdedness is the key factor," said Wardam. "People

who live in big families, mainly in the camps, are most likely to get abused."

Experts in general agree that unemployment and financial hardship play a major role in encouraging domestic violence.

Jordan suffers from poor economic conditions, where unemployment is officially estimated at 16 per cent and up to 27 per cent according to unofficial studies. Also, one fifth of the population live below the poverty line.

The workshop was attended by 50 professionals from ministries and institutions dealing with child abuse, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, the schools of medicine and nursing in Jordanian universities and the Royal Medical Services.

The department works to create the Higher Education Links Scheme. A link was established between the National Institute for Forensic Medicine and the Liverpool John Moores University in 1998. The three-year link aims to support research collaboration and staff and curriculum development to raise the standards of care and well-being of children.

Patriotism on trial: Anti-normalisation committee attacks Arab-Israeli actors at Al Fawanees Theatre Group press conference

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — A press conference hosted by the organiser of the 6th Amman International Theatre Festival turned into a confrontation between actors, journalists, and headline activists on Friday, over conflicting views on "normalisation" with Israel and the issue of receiving funds from foreign organisations.

Al Fawanees Theatre Group had organised the press conference in response to allegations two weeks ago from the "anti-normalisation committee" of the 13 professional associations that the festival is funded by foreign sources and that foreign groups participate in it. The committee called for a boycott of the festival last week.

The issue has been central to a long dispute between Al Fawanees and the Jordanian Artists Association. The latter considers the participation of Arab-Israeli actors in a Jordanian festival an act of "normalisation."

Waleed Abdul Salam, director of the theatre department in the Palestinian Cultural Ministry, and George Ibrahim, president of Palestinian Al Qasaba Theatre Group, spoke on behalf of the Palestinian actors and sought to affirm their identity regardless of their Israeli passports.

Abdul Salam exhibited a number of different documents that Palestinians are forced to carry to demonstrate the Israel's policy in dividing them.

"We did not choose these identification cards. They were imposed on us," Abdul Salam said. "These papers are not the key issue. We are only concerned with our ethics and morals as Palestinians."

Palestinians, however, were attacked by members of the "anti-normalisation committee" who said the Arab-Israeli actors' "patriotism" was in question and criticised Al Fawanees for receiving foreign funds, namely from

the American Ford Foundation.

Abdullah Hammoudeh, a member of the anti-normalisation committee who was in the audience, said foreign organisations operating in Jordan channel their efforts into promoting the peace process, a subject that is completely unacceptable to the committee.

Hammoudeh, who has written several anti-Zionist and anti-normalisation articles in the local press, said that the Ford Foundation has funded several projects in Israel.

"The Ford Foundation is the organisation that conducted a study on forms to eliminate the Palestinian resistance," he said. "It also funds several Israeli organisations."

Several members from Al Fawanees, however, objected to this point, saying that Hammoudeh has failed to provide documented evidence of his claims, although he promised to do so on several occasions.

Nader Omran, member of Al Fawanees, said that certain professional associations, who signed the boycott statement, have simultaneously received funds from foreign organisations.

"Some members from these associations have normalised

'My identity is not my passport. It is the content of my work and my conscience'

— Mohammed Bakri
Al Qasaba

ties and accepted funds from 'non-profit organisations' such as the Konrad Adenauer and Friedrich Naumann Foundations, who are known to promote normalisation."

Omran also reminded the audience that Al Qasaba was invited to the 6th Amman Theatre Festival last December. That festival was organised by the Jordanian Artists Association, but no complaints were made then.

The debate, however, went off-track when opponents of the festival channelled their anger towards one Arab-Israeli actor, Mohammad Bakri.

Bakri, member of Al Qasaba, has a full theatrical and cinematic portfolio. He worked closely with international film-makers and has made some projects with Israelis as well. One of his films, "Behind Bars" tackles the suffering of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. It was nominated as Best Foreign Film in the 1984 Academy Awards.

Muwaffaq Mahadin, member of the Jordanian Writers Association (JWA), attacked Bakri, saying that he was an "Israeli."

"We have agreed [at the JWA] that an Israeli is not only a Jew, because there are Arabs who are more Israeli than the Jews," Mahadin said. "An Israeli is any person who recognises the state of Israel and considers himself an Israeli citizen. One of them is Mohammad Bakri, because most of his works are based on the novels of Emile Habibi, and the latter's works are purely Israeli."

Emile Habibi is a renowned Palestinian writer and is widely recognised as a symbol of Palestinian nationalism. Bakri adapted one of Habibi's most famous books, "The Ombiyyat," for the theatre in a monodrama that was performed in last year's festival. The actor is also winner of the Palestine Actors Award.

Supporters of the festival dismissed these allegations,

'An Israeli is not only a Jew... There are Arabs who are more Israeli than the Jews. An Israeli is any person who recognises the state of Israel and considers himself an Israeli citizen. One of them is Mohammad Bakri'

— Muwaffaq Mahadin
JWA

on the principle that Palestinian groups present plays that have "a true patriotic spirit" and do not promote normalising with Israel.

Mohammad Bakri made a short statement saying "My identity is not my passport. It is the content of my work and my conscience."

He concluded his statement by expressing disapproval that "ignorance" are imposing certain specifications on the definition of "patriotism."

Al Qasaba, winner of the Palestine theatre award, is officially sent by the Palestinian Ministry of Culture. It will perform "The Immigrant" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday.

There are three Palestinian groups participating in the festival this year: Al Qasaba, Theatre Day and Al Bayader.

Man arrested, charged with sexual assault of school children

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — A man accused of molesting students at an Amman elementary school has been arrested and charged with several counts of the sexual assault of a minor, a judicial source told the Jordan Times on Friday.

The case involves a janitor employed at the school, who is accused of molesting "several" young pupils, according to the source.

"The janitor is now in detention at Jweidah prison, pending his trial at the Criminal Court," said the source.

Legal procedures against the man were initiated several weeks ago, after one child reported an incident to his parents, who immediately moved to press charges against the man. Sources close to the

school, however, said the child "first notified a teacher who immediately informed the student's parents."

Initial investigations have established that the janitor was involved in "lewd and lascivious" acts with several elementary school pupils in the school, police sources told the Jordan Times.

"He is alleged to have made sexual overtures to young boys at the school and, in some instances, to have caressed sensitive parts of young boys," said the source.

A lawyer said that if the man is found guilty, his sentence could range from a minimum of seven and a half years to the death penalty, depending on the evidence presented during the trial.

School officials could not be reached for comment.

Holland Friendship Association to build public garden in Amman

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — The Holland Friendship Association has a plan to install a public garden in Amman as part of the association's efforts to strengthen relations between Jordan and Holland. President of the Association Raouf Abu Jaber told the Jordan Times.

The new Holland Garden will be built under the supervision of the Holland Association, the main financial supporter of the garden, but Abu Jaber said the association will also ask the Greater Amman Municipality to grant the garden's land.

"Dutch gardens have mostly been known for their lily flowers since the sixteenth century. We will work on planting lilies throughout the garden, which will be a public garden for all citizens," Abu Jaber said.

The Holland Friendship Association was founded in 1996, and aims to improve relations between Jordan and Holland by creating social activities and charity projects which could help

citizens and needy people, Abu Jaber said.

Director of the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf, Brother Andrew Carpenter, who is one of the association's members, told the Jordan Times that "improving relations between Jordanian and Dutch people will obviously help our work and ease setting up charity projects to help needy people."

The Holland Friendship Association includes around 60 members who are well-known Arab and foreign personalities.

They plan to visit Holland on May 23. They will visit cultural and historical monuments and some of Dutch factories.

The journey will cost the association around JD3,790, and will include 30 members from the Holland Friendship Association and 30 other people who are interested in visiting Holland.

A similar association will be founded in Holland under the title of the "Dutch-Jordanian Friendship Association" which similar interests.

Police arrest pickpockets, search for three suspects in Na'our shooting incident

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police in the Karak governorate have found the body of Abdul Baset Musa, a 23-year old student at Muta University, dumped on the side of the Karak-Kathraba road.

A report in the local press Friday quoted police sources as saying that the man's death was caused by gunshot wound to the neck and that the victim had not been killed in the same spot where the body was discovered, but apparently had been moved to that area from another destination.

According to the sources, the body was moved to the National Centre for Forensic Medicine in Amman for an autopsy, while investigations are under-way to find the murderer.

Meanwhile, police in Amman announced the arrest of two suspects who they allege were in the habit of pickpocketing and handbag snatching. The suspects made their getaways in a rental car, police said.

The report in the local press on Friday said the two, in their twenties, were arrested by an officer who was driving his car near the Sixth Circle in Jabal Amman where an Arab woman of non-Jordanian nationality was screaming after two men riding in a car had snatched her handbag while she walked on the pavement.

The report said the police officer followed the car which sped away after the incident alerting other police cars in the

vicinity who also gave chase. Police finally arrested the suspects after their car collided with other vehicles.

According to the report, several other women had complained to Amman police about similar thefts by two men riding in a car whose licence plates did not bear clear numbers.

Quoting the same sources, the report said preliminary investigations revealed that the two suspects, who were unemployed, admitted committing numerous thefts in a rental car.

Once they emptied the handbags of cash or jewellery in the handbags, they disposed of the bag and its other contents, the report said.

Another report in the daily press on Friday, said female students from the Queen Alia College were fired on while riding in a bus in the Na'our district west of Amman.

In reporting the incident to the police, some of the girls said three youths riding in a pickup chased their bus, forcing the bus driver to stop.

They said the three men then got out of the truck and fired at the bus and in the air, forcing the bus occupants to lie on the floor for safety. The three men sped away in the pickup truck. According to the report, police in Na'our are searching for the assailants.

The girls were en route to Amman following a trip to the Dead Sea.

Population survey reveals urban-rural disparities in education health care

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — A 1997 population survey, released on Wednesday, shows that Jordan faces the daunting challenge of ensuring that rural children and their parents have better access to education, health, maternal care and family planning facilities.

Residents in rural areas make up 20 per cent of Jordan's 4.6 million populations. The survey, Jordan's second since 1990, also showed that the Kingdom's fertility rates, once among the highest in the region, had declined sharply to an average of four births per woman — three children less than in the mid-1970s.

The results of the 1997 Jordan Population and Family Health in Jordan (JPFHS) were released during a seminar held on Wednesday and chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf.

It was conducted by the Department of Statistics and the Maryland-based Demographic and Health Surveys Programme at Macro International, Macro Regional Coordinator Mohammad Ayad told the Jordan Times.

"But the survey shows that there are large discrepancies between urban and rural populations as the latter is lagging in terms of child and maternal health," he added.

"Survey findings can be

'...Many women in Jordan have a greater number of children than they want. If all unwanted births were prevented, the total wanted fertility rate would be 2.9... more than half of married women want to stop childbearing or have already been sterilised'

— JPFHS report

applied to the next five years as projections are usually made using past results of surveys and censuses," said Sri Poedjastoei, a demographer from Macro International.

Approximately two per cent of the population is malnourished. Eight per cent of citizens there are chronically malnourished, while five per cent of them are underweight, the survey added.

It also found that only 15 per cent of Jordanian women breastfeed their children during the first six months of their baby's life — a practice recommended by doctors worldwide.

The survey also found educational disparities between rural and urban areas as the majority of urban women have had formal education. Secondary or higher education stood at 70 per cent and 58 per cent for urban and rural women respectively.

The report recommends that information, education and communication programmes dealing with the benefits of family planning be strengthened to target the less educated women and those living in rural areas in southern Jordan.

Urban-rural variants also appeared in terms of access to sanitary facilities. Unlike rural residents, most urban houses have their own flush toilets and access to a public sewage system.

Those living in rural com-

munities are less likely to possess a radio, television or refrigerator compared to urban households where four in ten households have access to a telephone, and one in four have a private car, according to the survey.

Jordan has one of the lowest infant and child mortality rates in the region. However, urban-rural differences vary child-hood mortality with a 50 per cent higher mortality rate for rural infants. Children living in southern Jordan have the highest level of mortality.

"Mother's education is negatively associated with child mortality," said Ayad.

He said that mortality is highest among children whose mothers have no education and lowest for children whose mothers have attended secondary or higher education.

According to the survey rural mothers also benefit less from trained medical assistance for ante-natal care and delivery compared to urban mothers.

"Maternal mortality rates, that is mothers who die during or after pregnancy, stand at 79 deaths per 100,000 births in Jordan. This is quite low when compared to other developing countries where the rate is 150 to 500 per 100,000 births," added Ayad.

While the majority of urban births take place in a hospital with women more likely to

obtain ante natal care from a doctor, most rural women rely on a nurse or a midwife during delivery.

Hussein Shakhathreh, head of the General Department of Statistics, attributed the sharp decline in fertility rates — once among the highest in the world — to improved family planning and education.

"This decline is mainly related to the use of family planning and education. The use of contraceptives has doubled over the last 20 years," he said.

Jordan has one of the highest rates of contraceptive use in the Arab World. Half of the population of married women in Jordan use contraceptives, with the inter-uterine device (IUD) being the most popular while four per cent resort to female sterilisation.

The use of contraceptives among urban women was 20 per cent higher than among rural women, and rural women have one child more than urban women.

The survey, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), indicates little difference in the number of children an uneducated woman has compared to one who has attained a secondary education.

According to the report, "many women in Jordan have a greater number of children than they want. If all unwanted

births were prevented, the total wanted fertility rate would be 2.9... more than half of married women want to stop childbearing or have already been sterilised."

As for Jordan's education record, the survey showed that nine out of ten children between the ages of six and 15 are educated. Differences in male and female education only appear after the age of 35, when female illiteracy increases.

"There is a negative correlation between education and the age of marital status," Shakhathreh told the Jordan Times.

He explained that the age of first marriage for females in Jordan is increasing with a tendency for later marriages. "The improvement of educational opportunities, particularly for girls, has resulted in their staying in school longer and subsequently has raised their age at first marriage," he said.

The mean age for marriage in Jordan is 21 with a six-year gap in marital age between women with more than secondary education and women with less education.

There is also an inverse relation between education and polygamy. The percentage of females with primary education and more in polygamous unions decreases to 12 per cent, compared to 19 per cent for women with no education.

What's Going On

FILMS

- German film "Jakob der Lügner" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 7:30 p.m.
- "The Shame" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman, on Sunday April 18 at 6:30 p.m.
- "Deep Impact" at Books@Cafe, Jabal Amman on Sunday April 18 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 46504578).

AMMAN INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL

- Tunisian play "In Search of Aida" and Palestinian play "The Immigrant" at the Royal Cultural Centre at 7:30 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. respectively.

French Gaullist head quits, shattering right

PARIS (R) — Philippe Seguin, the leader of France's main opposition group, plunged the right into fresh disarray on Friday by quitting the Gaullist party presidency.

Seguin, a burly and lugubrious politician who once cherished hopes of supplanting President Jacques Chirac as leader of the French right, announced his departure in a biting statement accusing Chirac's aides of undermining Gaullism.

His resignation took effect immediately, throwing into a tailspin the conservative campaign for the June 13 European parliamentary poll just two months away.

"I no longer have anything to do with the RPR presidency, nor with heading a European slate expected to defend the president's policies," he said, complaining that Chirac's aides were hatching "suicidal strategies" behind his back.

"I find myself in a situa-

tion where loyalty, clarity and openness are no longer cardinal virtues."

A stormy personality who led the failed "No" camp in the 1992 referendum over the Maastricht treaty on European integration, Seguin never seemed at home in his role as the conservatives' leading candidate for the European election.

He also failed to reunite the fractured conservative opposition after taking over the Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) party following the right's disastrous defeat in 1997 parliamentary elections.

His alliance coalition to bring the right together fell apart after only a few months when the centre-right Union for French Democracy (UDF) and Gaullist dissident Charles Pasqua decided to run rival slates in the European election.

Seguin also had strained relations with Chirac, the

RPR's founder and still the most popular figure for the rank-and-file.

His resignation statement did not directly attack the president but accused his entourage of cozying up to other right-wing groups and blurring the lines between Chirac's policies and those of the left-wing government.

A Chirac aide said Seguin's resignation had taken the president by surprise, "even more so because he has spent so much time on the crisis in Kosovo over the past three weeks."

Chirac had embraced Seguin, then National Assembly speaker and one of France's most popular politicians, as a possible saviour for the right just before the 1997 elections, asking him to lead a last-minute drive to avert defeat.

But the left won anyway, leaving socialist Lionel Jospin as prime minister and Seguin as the New



French Rally for the Republic Party (RPR) president Philippe Seguin seen at the RPR headquarters in this December 1998 file photo. Seguin announced April 16 that he was resigning as leader of the centre-right RPR party thus withdrawing his candidature as head of the list for the forthcoming European elections. Since his election as party leader he has enjoyed a stormy relationship with the French President and founder of the party, whom he accused of not supporting sufficiently the Gaullist movement (Reuters photo)

Gaullist Party president.

With Chirac disgraced by that defeat, Seguin was soon being touted as his replacement in 2002 presidential elections.

Seguin publicly insisted

he had no intention of challenging Chirac but acted as if the president were politically dead and he was the natural successor.

But Chirac slowly won back the RPR rank-and-file,

which demonstratively applauded him longer and louder than Seguin at RPR meetings, and Seguin had to climb down to save his own post as nominal head of the Gaullist movement.

Scot nationalists limp towards May poll

EDINBURGH (R) — Britain's ruling Labour Party has Scottish nationalists on the ropes ahead of historic elections for a new parliament, confounding expectations of a close contest, political analysts said on Friday.

Bloodied but unbowed, the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP) is limping into the May 6 vote, when only a month ago it appeared as if it might be racing to victory and a possible break-up of Britain.

Labour has opened up a 16 percentage point lead in polls over the SNP — its biggest margin yet — and SNP leader Alex Salmond's personal popularity has tumbled to an all-time low of 25 per cent.

The British press has strongly criticised what it sees as two SNP blunders: promising higher taxes in Scotland than in the rest of Britain, and opposing NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia.

Polls show that the unpopular policies have dented nationalist hopes of running Scotland's first parliament in 300 years — a body with more local than national power.

Apart from its own mis-

smack into the well-oiled machine of the ruling Labour Party, which traditionally dominates Scottish politics, and a partisan press, which has been strongly anti-nationalist and has frightened voters by playing up the costs of divorcing Britain.

The Economist magazine joked in its latest issue that so many Labour officials had been ferried to Scotland from London in the past month that it was beginning to look like a British general election.

"Labour's got it won, and they deserve it, although the SNP will be in a strong position as the main opposition," James Kellas, a professor of Scottish politics at the University of Glasgow, told Reuters.

Others, however, note that the campaign has nearly three weeks to run and say Britain's involvement in the unpredictable conflict in Yugoslavia increases the scope for surprise shifts in voter opinion.

Salmond irritated Prime Minister Tony Blair and even some of his own supporters by criticising the Kosovo war as "unpardonable folly".

But his main point —

that NATO was hurting the Kosovo Albanian refugees it swore to protect — looked prophetic following this week's accidental NATO bombings of ethnic Albanian refugees and Serbian civilians.

A poll by the Daily Record newspaper published on Friday showed that support for air strikes had fallen slightly, from 55 per cent to 49 per cent of Scots, following this week's incidents.

News this week that some 2,000 jobs could be lost in Scotland's shipping industry due to the withdrawal of Norwegian owners Kvaerner could also hurt Labour with voters.

"The Blair government is currently grappling with two major crises — Kosovo and Kvaerner — both of which could backfire badly before polling booths open," the Glasgow Herald said.

The Economist added: "The opinion-based lead was established only in the past month, and could disappear just as quickly, particularly if the Serb war goes badly wrong."

Polls also show that 28 per cent of Scots remain undecided — a large pool of voters to be convinced in the next three weeks.

Still, it will be an uphill battle for the nationalists, who were hoping victory would give them a chance to hold a referendum on outright independence from Britain — which Scotland helped form in a 1707 union with England.

In a bid to get the upper hand after a year virtually tied with Labour, the SNP tried to outflank Blair's centrist "New Labour" on its abandoned left. It promised voters to undo a labour income tax cut and spend the money on services like education and health, and criticised the Yugoslavia air war.

The moves made some sense. Scots are traditionally more left-wing than their English counterparts and Britain's conservative party did not win a single seat in Scotland in the 1997 general election.

But it was still a calculated gamble.

"Not that there is overwhelming support for the government's (Kosovo) position among Scots ... But it appears that criticism is not expected from a party leader while British lives are at risk," John Curtice, a professor at Strathclyde University, wrote in the Herald.

Bhutto supporters plot reply to jail sentence

ISLAMABAD (AP) — While former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto labelled her conviction on graft charges and jail sentence "a gross miscarriage of justice," her supporters demonstrated Friday throughout the country.

The biggest show of support for the embattled Ms. Bhutto was in her hometown of Karachi in southern Sindh province, where some 1,500 activists marched through the streets.

They burned effigies of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, beat their chests and vowed to revenge the conviction of their leader.

Meanwhile in the federal capital of Islamabad, Ms. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party top echelon met in emergency meetings to plot a course of action.

It's expected that the executive will organise coordinated demonstrations, perhaps after Ms. Bhutto returns to Pakistan sometime next week.

There were much smaller demonstrations in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and in Lahore, the Punjab provincial capital and home to Sharif.

In Lahore several dozen women decried Ms. Bhutto's conviction and sentence.

On Thursday a Pakistani court sentenced Ms. Bhutto, who is currently in London, to five years in jail, disqualified her from politics and fined her \$8.6 million.

As well the court ordered her extensive property confiscated.

In the capital of Islamabad about 12 young Bhutto supporters were arrested by police when they tried to stage a demonstration. A similar protest and about the same size was dispersed in neighbouring Rawalpindi.

"The Charges against me were based from the outset on fabricated charges and forged

documents created by the Nawaz regime to politically frame me and ultimately undermine the Pakistan People's Party," Ms. Bhutto said in a statement from London.

Ms. Bhutto has asked international human rights groups to study the documents. She accused Sharif of behaving like a dictator.

"Nawaz Sharif shall not succeed in creating a dictatorship in Pakistan," she said. Charges of corruption and abuse of power have dogged Ms. Bhutto for much of her political career.

Both her first and second terms in office were brought to a sudden halt when her governments were dismissed on charges of runaway corruption and misuse of power. She has steadfastly maintained her innocence.

Her last government was dismissed in 1996. Sharif came to power in general elections held in February 1997. Her first government was dismissed in August 1990 after only 20 months in power.

But Sharif too has been tagged with charges of widespread corruption, and Ms. Bhutto has filed several charges of graft against the prime minister, his family members and colleagues.

In Pakistan's rough and tumble politics corruption has become endemic.

It's not immediately clear whether Ms. Bhutto will be arrested when she returns to Pakistan within the next one week.

Her lawyers in Islamabad say it's unlikely because they will appeal her conviction. Under Pakistani law the sentence is stayed while an appeal is being heard, said Ifikar Gailani, a senior party official and prominent lawyer.

Colombian landslide buries more than 40

BOGOTA (AP) — More than 40 people were buried by a landslide in a village in western Colombia, local authorities reported Thursday.

Most of the fatalities are rescue workers, firefighters, police and local officials who were digging through the rubble of a house that had caved in earlier Thursday killing three people, Argelia Mayor Zambora Ospina told Caracol television late Thursday.

"So far we've pulled 28 bodies and we've only begun digging," Ospina said.

"The magnitude of the disaster is tremendous. At first we thought there were 30 fatalities, but now there are more than 40," she added.

The same region was struck by an earthquake in January that killed some 1,200 people. Rescue operations were suspended late Thursday because of driving rain in the area.

Thursday's tragedy raises the death toll from two weeks of landslides and floods in the western, coffee-growing region of Colombia to more than 60, local emergency committee officials said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Pretender to French throne denies reports he is dying

PARIS (AFP) — The 90-year-old pretender to the French throne, Henri Robert Ferdinand Marie Louis-Philippe of Orleans, Count of Paris, on Friday denied reports that he is dying. The right-wing daily Le Figaro, quoting sources at the count's Saint-Louis foundation, reported Friday that he had been admitted to hospital and was in intensive care following a sudden worsening of his health. The count categorically denied the "malicious rumours about his health," in a statement sent by his secretariat to AFP. "These rumours have been peddled by an unscrupulous journalist," it said. Sources close to the count, speaking after the denial, said he had received "eminent figures" in recent days who informed him of developments in the Kosovo crisis. Le Figaro had reported that the count, who suffers from prostate cancer, was in hospital, but did not say where. A few months ago he took up residence in Dreux, west of Paris, close to the chapel which is the family mausoleum. "I won't be far from my last dwelling," he told Le Figaro at the time. The count, who has nine children and 40 grandchildren, claims the succession to the French monarchy abolished in 1848. Pretender since 1940, he and his wife Isabelle of Orleans and Braganza only returned from exile in Portugal in 1950 after France lifted a ban on members of the former royal family.

Burundi's ambassador to S. Africa hijacked in Pretoria

PRETORIA (AFP) — Burundi's ambassador to South Africa, Gedeon Magete, has been hijacked in front of his official residence in Pretoria, police said Friday. The ambassador, his wife and a friend were forced out of his luxury German car at gunpoint by two men when they arrived at the residence in the wealthy suburb of Waterkloof Thursday evening, police spokesman Inspector Gideon Thessner told AFP. "The attackers could not speak English well, but they forced them to lie on the ground and repeatedly threatened them, saying 'Shoot you, shoot you,'" Thessner said. The robbers then sped off in Magete's car. Thessner said there had been at least three similar "car-jackings" in the suburb this week. Magete was last week robbed of his briefcase at gunpoint in front of his house, Thessner said. The second attack on him occurred less than 24 hours after a senior representative of the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) was gang-raped in the adjacent suburb of Waterkloof Ridge. The attack on the 64-year-old woman, who was on a working visit from the United States, sparked an outcry from officials of the United Nations in South Africa, who demanded assurances that they could carry out their work in safety. The incidents were the latest in a spate of criminal attacks on foreigners in recent months. In February the Canadian High Commissioner to South Africa was hospitalised after being robbed and assaulted at a Cape Town hotel.

'Serbs sheltered young Albright from Nazis'

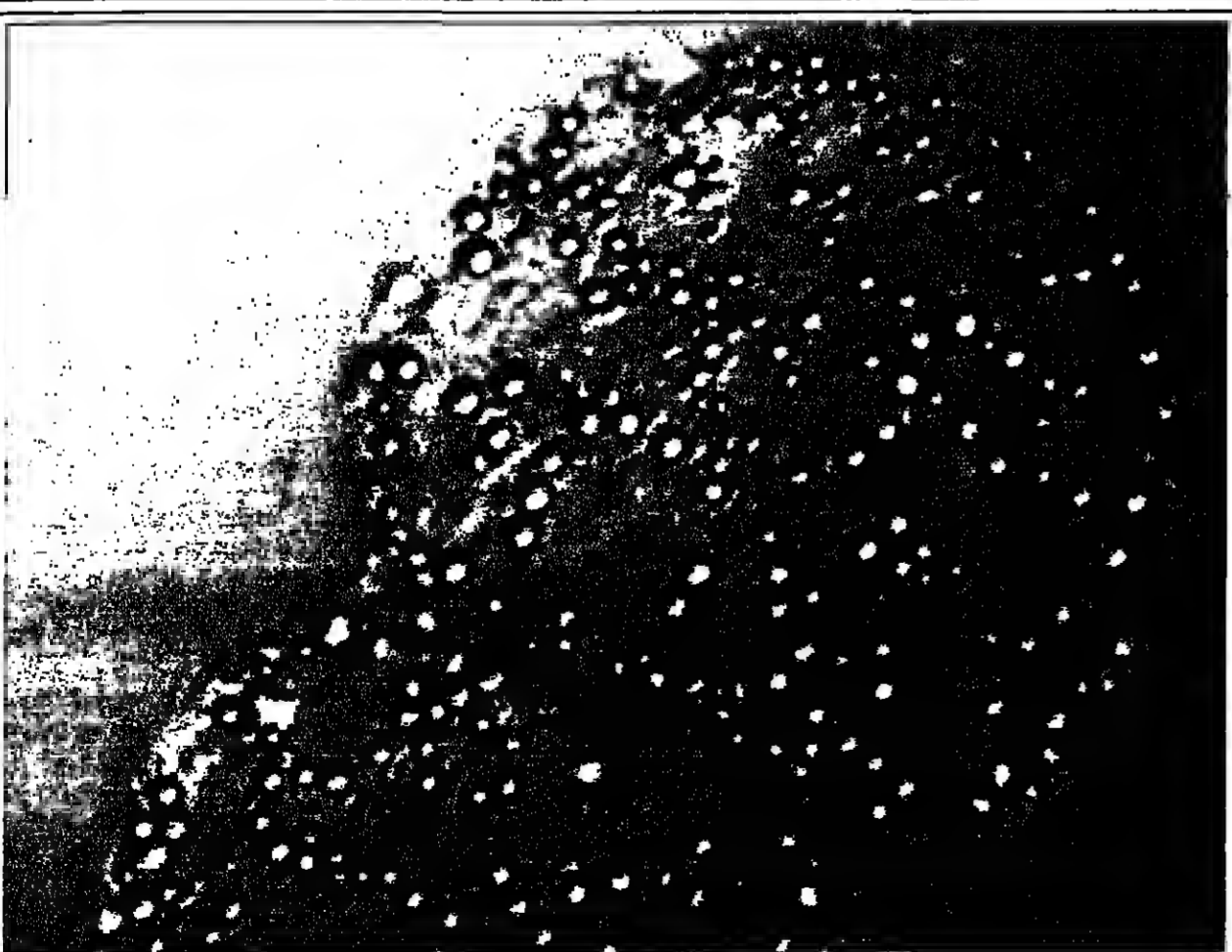
NICOSIA (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was sheltered in a Serb village as a small child during World War II, a Cypriot magazine reported on Friday. Middle-aged Serb villager Ljuto Popic told a visiting Cypriot journalist from the magazine that Albright's Jewish-Czech family took refuge in his village in 1939 to escape the threat of persecution from the Nazis in Prague. Popic claimed that Albright was a "very close childhood friend" during her stay in Vrinjetzka Banja and said he could not understand how she now backed the NATO bombardments on Yugoslavia, the Greek-language To Periodiko reported. The article was accompanied by several faded black-and-white photographs, including one showing a small boy and a plump little girl in an embrace, apparently Popic and a four-year-old Albright. To Periodiko said the same village, which lies around 80 kilometres from the Serbian town of Kraljevo, was bombed by NATO on April 12 during a Cypriot mission to deliver aid to Yugoslavia. The following day, villagers scrawled a message on an unexploded NATO bomb: "Thank you, Mrs. Albright, for the presents you send us in return for our hospitality."

ECOWAS probes troops human rights abuses in S. Leone

LAGOS (AFP) — The West African ECOWAS grouping will probe alleged human rights abuses by its troops deployed in Sierra Leone, a top official said in report Friday. Lansana Kouyate, ECOWAS executive secretary said troops of the Nigerian-led 15,000 ECOMOG intervention force were alleged to have committed the abuses in Freetown in January. The ECOMOG force was first set up by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1990 to intervene in Liberia. Its soldiers have since deployed in Sierra Leone to support the government against insurgents and a junta which temporarily ousted it in 1997-98. On Jan. 6, rebels of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invaded Freetown in a bid to topple President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah and some of them were summarily executed. "I have asked the force commander to give me a full report on the allegations," Kouyate said. He said U.N. monitors, citing witnesses, had alleged in their report that ECOMOG troops carried out "summary executions" during the rebel onslaught. He said the 16-member body was determined to get to the root of the matter to prevent a recurrence.

Police kill Maoist outlaws in gunbattle

HYDERABAD, India (AP) — Police killed eight Maoist rebels in a two-hour gun battle in a village in the south-eastern state of Andhra Pradesh, a spokesman said Friday. Rebels from the banned people's war group had taken shelter in a house in Satyampally village, 100 kilometres north of Hyderabad, the state capital. Police raided their hide-out Thursday, exchanging gun fire and grenades. Eight rebels died in the fighting, two of them women. Two policemen were wounded. Police had killed 10 activists of the rebel group in the same area March 31. Police said the slain rebels belonged to the Dubbak armed squad of PWG which is infamous for its violence. The battle brought the number of rebels killed this year to 75, while the Maoists have killed 40 people, including policemen. The PWG, a Maoist-Leninist organisation, formed in 1980, is waging an armed struggle for the creation of a Communist state comprising the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. The group targets landlords and policemen, charging them with exploiting poor landless peasants. More than 5,500 people have died in fighting in the last 15 years.



A team of international scientists said April 15 they had stumbled on a giant, sulphur-eating bacterium that forms pearl-like strands and which can be seen with the naked eye, unlike all other known bacteria which are invisible. Named *Thiomargarita namibiensis*, or 'Sulphur pearl of Namibia', it thrives on sulphur and lives in smelly mud just off the coast of Namibia in southern Africa. Earth's ecosystems depend on the recycling of elements such as oxygen, sulphur and nitrogen. Microorganisms are key to this — for instance, freeing up nitrogen in the soil by breaking down plant matter. And sulphur-loving organisms found in the sea play a similar role. This is a light-phantomograph image of a terminal cell of a string of *Thiomargarita*, with the focus at the upper end of the cell (Reuters photo)

ar to French throne reports he is dying

The 84-year-old pretender to the French throne, Robert Fiamingo, died on Friday, according to reports. Fiamingo, who was born in 1914, was a member of the Orléanist branch of the French royal family. He had been in poor health for some time and had been in hospital for several days. His death was announced by his family.

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World News



Russian President Boris Yeltsin (right) hugs his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rakhmonov during their meeting April 16. Yeltsin and Rakhmonov signed a cooperation agreement on Friday which Rakhmonov said provides for a Russian military base in Tajikistan (Reuters photo)

Yeltsin, Tajik president agree to sign cooperation agreements

MOSCOW (AP) — Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmonov said he and Boris Yeltsin tentatively agreed Friday to allow Russia to establish a military base in the central Asian nation.

About 25,000 Russian troops are already stationed in the former Soviet republic, but the new agreement would apparently allow Moscow to keep forces at a base that would be outside of the government's control.

The agreement is still not final, and the two sides will not sign it until they have conferred with leaders from other former Soviet states.

A Kremlin spokesman said Russian officials would soon go to Tajikistan to discuss the deal.

The Russian troops are currently deployed as part of a force from various former Soviet states monitoring a 1997 peace agreement that ended a civil war

between the government and the mostly Islamic opposition.

Rakhmonov, in Moscow on a three-day visit, said a base agreement would help provide increased stability in, which borders Afghanistan to the south, where some anti-government forces are based.

"Russia was and is the guarantor of maintaining peace and stability not only in our region but also in the whole world," said at a

briefing with Yeltsin in the Kremlin.

During their meeting, Yeltsin and signed a cooperation agreement that encourages stronger military ties and obligates both sides "not to use force, to threaten the use of force, or interfere with each other's internal affairs."

Earlier in the day, attended a ceremony at Russia's tomb of the unknown soldier. Yeltsin was not present.

Mir crew members conduct experiments during space walk

MOSCOW (AP) — Two crew members aboard the Mir space station made a grueling six-hour space walk Friday, but still failed to complete a number of planned experiments.

Russian cosmonaut Viktor Afanasyev and French astronaut Jean-Pierre Haignere had been expected to spend about five hours outside the ship. But various delays and problems forced them to spend an extra hour to open space, said Vera Medvedkova, a spokeswoman for mission control.

The space walk Friday was the fifth for Afanasyev, a veteran of two Mir missions, and the first for Haignere. The third crew member, Russian Sergei Avdeyev, was monitoring his crew mates from inside the Mir.

The problems started when the crew spent extra time fixing a minor malfunction on a spacesuit ventilation system. Medvedkova didn't say which crew member's suit had the problem.

Then, an experiment to test equipment used to patch holes on the ship went awry when a container of glue failed to open in space, apparently because of a faulty valve, Medvedkova said.

The equipment was originally designed to seal leaks in Mir's Spektr module, which was severely damaged when a cargo ship slammed into it during a practice docking in 1997. Spektr has never been repaired, and the tools never

tested, because crew members at the time could not find all the module's leaks.

Behind schedule because of the problems, Afanasyev and Haignere then had no time to set up a Russian device called sprut, or octopus, to test radiation levels around the Mir.

The two had less trouble with their other tasks. They attached various organic substances in special casings to the outside of the ship to see what happens to living matter in space, and retrieved a French-made "meteorite trap" that was installed earlier this year to catch microscopic debris when Mir passed through a meteor shower.

In the final part of the space walk, a small satellite made

by Russian and French schoolchildren was put into space. If all goes according to plan, the satellite will beam a recording of their voices that will be heard on the Mir and at mission control, outside Moscow.

The Mir's current three-man crew is possibly its last. If outside investors cannot be found to foot the 13-year-old station's \$250 million yearly costs, the cash-strapped government may have to discard it in August.

The United States has been pressuring the government to dedicate itself to the international space station, a 16-nation project that has been delayed by Russia's inability to build key components on time.

Prisoners want transfer from 'too-soft' private jail

BROUGH, England (AFP) — Some prisoners at Britain's first privately-run jail have asked for a transfer because they find staff too friendly, according to a report published Friday.

The culture shock for some inmates in the relaxed and spotless Wolds jail in northeast England proved so unsettling they asked to be relocated to jails where a familiar "mutual antipathy" remained between staff and inmates.

In a glowing report of conditions at the prison at Brough, Chief Inspector of Prisons Sir David Ramsbotham said excellent staff/prisoner relations had created a humane, safe and caring community.

Inmates were on first-name terms with staff, who addressed them either by Christian name or "Mr.", shared meals with them and treated them as individuals.

The reception process was "no more threatening than checking in at the airport" and bullying, drug use and graffiti were uncommon.

Ramsbotham reported that for most prisoners the "con-

tinuously polite and cheerful approach acted as a balm", giving them renewed hope and setting them off on the path to rehabilitation.

Hardened criminals found themselves relaxing their guard and "opening up".

But for some it proved too much, with complaints that it was not a "proper" jail and that using first names was "a gimmick".

Ramsbotham wrote: "That staff treated all prisoners as fellow human beings came as a complete shock to some prisoners, who could not adjust to the contrast with other establishments."

"They often asked to be transferred out to a place where a degree of mutual antipathy existed and they could survive."

Ramsbotham stressed, however, that the regime was not soft and indiscipline was dealt with sharply.

Wolds was opened in 1992 and holds about 400 inmates, both medium-security and those in custody awaiting trial.

Anwar wife accuses police of brutality amid new protests

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — The wife of jailed former deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim accused Malaysian police of brutality Friday as opposition groups called more protests against Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Anwar, who was sacked by Mahathir in September and later arrested, was jailed on four corruption charges. He has said he is the victim of a political conspiracy.

Clashes broke out between police and demonstrators after Anwar was sent to jail.

Azizah said the beating of her husband "seems to be an example to be followed by the rest of the force."

"This seems to be the order of the day that you actually attack a defenceless person," she said. "The former chief of police has the audacity to do that and is not being charged yet."

A noisy protest was held by Anwar supporters Friday outside a mosque near the court where he had been tried and sentenced.

The 200 demonstrators, surrounded by a similar number of onlookers, gathered outside a mosque near the courthouse where Anwar was sentenced to six years jail and charged "Down, Mahathir, down."

They also clapped and sang their battle slogan "reformasi" to the tune of "When the Saints Come Marching In."

Witnesses saw some demonstrators kicking a passing police car, which quickly left the scene. Traffic slowed as the protesters spilled over from a light rail transit station in front of the mosque.

The protest occurred shortly after Friday prayers. Many of the men taking part wore Islamic skull caps.

The demonstration ended after 30 minutes of chanting and singing, but leaflets were scattered on the road, urging undergraduates to gather in the same area Saturday for a "peaceful march."

Education Minister Najib Tun Razak warned that stern action would be taken against teachers and students who joined the protests.

"We have photos of the demonstrators and we are trying to identify if there are teachers and students among them," Najib was quoted as saying by Bernama.

"We will not compromise when it comes to activities against the law."

The ministry is working with the police, and university students who took part in the protests could be suspended or expelled, he said.

Anwar, Mahathir's former chosen successor, was himself beaten by police after his arrest last September. Former national police chief Abdul Rahim Noor admitted assaulting him and is expected to face charges.

At a news conference, Anwar said he was still resting.

Azizah demanded the release of her party's vice-president Tien Chua and party activist Malik Hussin from police custody.

The two were held after

Anwar, who was sacked by Mahathir in September and later arrested, was jailed on four corruption charges. He has said he is the victim of a political conspiracy.

Clashes broke out between police and demonstrators after Anwar was sent to jail.

"Both Tien and Malik were badly beaten by police during and after the demonstrations," Azizah said in a statement, adding that other demonstrators were also beaten.

"It was only after Tien, Malik and the others were beaten in full public view that the demonstrators became restless. A small minority of them became so incensed that they chose to give vent to their anger," Azizah added.

Anwar, Mahathir's former chosen successor, was himself beaten by police after his arrest last September. Former national police chief Abdul Rahim Noor admitted assaulting him and is expected to face charges.

At a news conference,

China looks for clues, Korean Air crash

SHANGHAI, China (AP) — Investigators searched demolished shanty housing and a debris-strewn industrial park Friday for clues in the crash of a Korean Air cargo jet as the official death toll rose to nine.

Two people injured on the ground in Thursday's crash died Friday, said Wan Mingming, a spokeswoman for the Shanghai city government. That left 33 people injured, six seriously, she said.

The new death toll of nine includes the three-member Korean plane crew, China's state-run Xinhua news agency reported, citing a Chinese civil aviation official. There were conflicting reports of the number of dead and injured on Thursday.

Two minutes after leaving Shanghai's busy Hongqiao airport, the plane climbed to 1,000 metres and in its last communication with the control tower was told to bank left and rise to 1,500 metres. The South Korean ministry of construction and transportation said.

In its final seconds, the McDonnell Douglas Md-11 just missed a seven-story housing block and then slammed into a construction site and its makeshift housing for migrant workers 10 kilometres south of the airport. The impact left a crater 20 metres long and nearly 8 metres deep, the Shanghai news reported.

One engine turbine and the plane's tail section lay on a nearby street, which like others in the neighbourhood of apartments, building sites and fields was covered with bits of metal, paper and fabric. Windows were shattered 200 metres away. Some had fist-sized holes in them from flying debris.

Witnesses saw the plane making a slow, loud descent but said there were no visible signs of trouble.

"There was no fire or explosion. It came down" gradually, said a construction foreman who only gave his surname, Ding.

Investigators from China's civil aviation administration were still searching for the plane's flight data recorder, according to Wan, the city spokeswoman.

The cockpit is buried in mud and must be dug out before the recorders or the bodies of the crew can be recovered, Shanghai television reported, citing city construction officials.

Specialists from Korean Air and U.S. aircraft maker Boeing, which owns McDonnell Douglas, arrived Friday to take part in the investigation, the report said.

The 7-year-old cargo plane was headed for the South

Korean capital of Seoul, carrying 68 tonnes of mushrooms, machine parts and other cargo, Korean Air executives said.

Korean Air, South Korea's premier commercial airline, suggested that terrorism may have been involved.

At a news conference in Seoul late Thursday, Korean Air vice president Shim e-Taek called it a "high possibility" that explosives destroyed the plane.

Korean Air was the target of a previous terrorist attack by agents under orders from South Korea's Communist rival, North Korea.

In 1987, a man and a woman planted a bomb on board a Korean Air Boeing 707 that exploded over the Andaman sea, killing all 115 people on board. The woman, captured alive, confessed to being a North Korean spy.



Chinese police survey damage April 16 after a Korean Air cargo jet crashed into a construction site in a suburb the previous day after takeoff from Shanghai airport. China continued to search for clues to the crash of the cargo jet which killed nine people. The cargo plane was carrying up to 70 tonnes of green tea, wire rope, machinery parts and mushrooms when it crashed (Reuters photo)

Aung San Suu Kyi's son arrives for a visit in Myanmar

YANGON (AFP) — Aung San Suu Kyi's youngest son arrived in Myanmar on Friday on his first visit since her British husband died from cancer last month, officials said.

The democracy leader met her son Kim Hein Lin Aris, 21, at Yangon airport after he flew in from Bangkok, a government statement said.

Michael Aris, Aung San Suu Kyi's husband of 27

years, died on his 53rd birthday in Britain on March 27 after the government denied his request to pay a final visit to his wife in Myanmar.

Diplomats in Yangon said plans for Kim Aris' visit had been kept as low-key as possible to avoid political complications.

There was no indication if Aung San Suu Kyi's eldest son Alexander would also visit his mother.

Myanmar officials have said that as Aung San Suu Kyi's sons are not involved in politics they have had no problem in obtaining visas.

The military government accused Michael Aris of interfering in the internal politics of Myanmar during his infrequent visits to the country.

Aung San Suu Kyi is locked in a political battle with the government which

lost 1990 elections to her National League for Democracy but has refused to hand over power.

She refused a junta offer to let her travel to Britain to see her dying husband, fearing she would not be allowed to return.

In an interview published in a British newspaper this month, Aung San Suu Kyi said her sons had asked her to travel to Britain anyway

to see Aris before he died.

"Imagine how hard it was to say no to them," she was quoted as saying.

Accusing the junta of "political blackmail", she said: "After all, their greatest wish was to see me leave. They were desperate to get me out of the country and they thought my husband's illness gave them the perfect opportunity."

Aung San Suu Kyi rarely

alludes to personal matters in interviews, saying that many people suffer far greater personal anguish than she does in a country accused by foreign governments and rights groups of a catalogue of human rights abuses.

Aris, an Oxford academic and a distinguished Tibetan scholar, made his last visit to see his wife in 1996. Several subsequent visa requests are

thought to have been rejected.

Her sons have been more frequent visitors to the country where Aung San Suu Kyi returned in 1988 and soon emerged at the head of the pro-democracy movement.

Myanmar justified its failure to grant Aris a visa by saying its medical facilities were too primitive to treat him.

It also accused her of manipulating her husband's illness for political gain. The junta suggested that she should have gone to visit Aris in England as she was in good health.

Aris was cremated at a ceremony attended by only close family and friends in England earlier this month and Aung San Suu Kyi held funeral rites for him at her home in Yangon.

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Algeria's new twist

ABDULAZIZ BOUTEFLIKA, who on Friday won the elections for president in Algeria and who is being described by news agencies as the choice of the country's powerful military, has tough tasks ahead of him. Not only will he have to defend his election against charges of fraud and election rigging, but he has to carry out the daunting mission of ending his country's seven-year-old bloodletting, a task that defied all the efforts of the many presidents and prime ministers who attempted to address the country's fratricide.

Bouteflika's election was marred by the pullout of all the other six candidates who accused the establishment of rigging the election on his behalf. The six are all veteran politicians and former officials in recent and past governments. Their charge of fraud is being echoed by European governments. The word has apparently made Interior Minister Abdelmalek Sellal "sick" because this is what he has heard "since (independence) 1962, fraud, fraud, fraud."

One wonders why the Algerian authorities were only bearing fraud since 1962 from its citizens. In fact, when elections that President Chadli Benjedjed ensured were fair and free in 1992 resulted in an overwhelming win for the Islamic Salvation Front, the authorities, led by the National Liberation Front that dominated Algeria since independence and to which the new president belongs, declared them null and void, throwing the country into its bloody crisis.

With the new political chasm in the Algerian body politic created by the election of Bouteflika, we wonder if the new president will be able to tackle the country's chronic problems. If he is the shrewd politician some say he is, he should put political squabbling behind him and tackle head on the country's civil war. For that is the task that each president since 1992 failed to execute. Meanwhile, Bouteflika should not belittle the effect of so many people in and outside Algeria who cry foul.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Zaid Hamzeh said the claim that religious traditions lie behind women's failure in municipal elections is inaccurate or at least does not tell the whole story. Hamzeh cited the municipal elections in Iran two months ago where 25 out of the 37 female candidates were elected — a high figure even in developed countries. What happened in Iran, which fully implements the Islamic Sharia, does not occur in other Muslim and Arab countries, where women have gained their electoral rights long ago. Rather, the opposite happens as women's success in elections continue to face "failure after failure" although the number of female candidates is the same as male candidates, said the writer. Hamzeh then wondered how the same Islamic traditions, which allow women to vote, prevent them from winning, and force them to elect a male candidate. The writer concluded that this is not a religious but rather a "male issue," that men choose the Koranic verses which best serve their interests, neglecting verses where both sexes are treated equally. According to the writer, women should free themselves from male dominance, pointing out that they will be put to the test again in the coming electoral elections in July.

Al Dustour's Oreib Rintawi said that in 1998, 612 people were killed and 17,177 injured in 43,343 traffic accidents, which caused JD130 million. A country in war would not suffer such losses, which are caused by a lack of safe traffic standards and behaviour, said Rintawi. Another "terrifying" fact, according to an official report, is that there are 16 deaths for each 1000 car accidents in Jordan — a proportion ten times larger than in developed countries. This means that it is ten times less safe to drive here than in these countries, noted to the writer. Although improving roads and traffic legislation is important, promoting a social and cultural public awareness among the next generation is a must, argued the writer. Although people know they are violating the law, they keep doing it for social, cultural and psychological reasons, said the writer.

Either it's terrorism, or it's not

By Gwynne Dyer

"IT IS not possible to doubt the fairness of a Scottish court," said Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi last month, signalling that he would shortly hand over two Libyan suspects in the 1989 bombing of Pan American Flight 103 for trial in the Netherlands (but under Scottish law).

Now the accused men, Abdel Basset Al Meghrah and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, are locked into underground cells awaiting trial in Camp Zeist, near Utrecht. A great deal of money and many United Nations personnel have been deployed to bring the two former Libyan Arab Airlines officials to trial — and yet, the court could easily find them not guilty, in which case the truth about Flight 103 may never be known.

"No matter who is funding international terrorism, it's still international terrorism," said former British intelligence officer David Shayler last August, alleging a MI6 plot to assassinate Qadhafi in 1996.

Shayler says he learned of a botched MI6 attempt on Qadhafi's life in February of that year (a roadside bomb killed several innocent bystanders, but missed the Libyan leader) when he was talking to agents from Britain's other intelligence agency, MI5, which is responsible for foreign operations. Shayler is now in Paris successfully resisting extradition to Britain, so the truth may never be known about that operation either.

Many fewer Libyans died in the

attack on Qadhafi (whether British intelligence was involved or not) than the 270 Americans, British and others who died when Pan Am Flight 103 crashed on the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1988 (whether Libyan intelligence was involved or not). But the game is the same regardless of the precise number of lives lost. Either it's international terrorism, or it's not.

Nobody ever talks about extraditing MI6 operatives to Libya. If they really did set up the operation to kill Qadhafi, it was "deniable," and the British government could subsequently disown its "rogue elements." The same, of course, goes for Libya.

Qadhafi does occasionally talk about trying to extradite the U.S. officials who ordered the 1986 bombing of Libya in which his adopted daughter was killed, but that's pure posturing. State terrorism by fighter-bomber, however flimsy the pretext (two U.S. soldiers had been killed by a bomb in a Berlin disco, and Washington blamed Libya) is never illegal. But state terrorism that uses bombs in suicides is another matter.

It was a bomb in a suitcase (a Samsonite suitcase, in fact) that brought down Pan Am 103. After a three-year investigation led by British police and assisted by the FBI, charges were laid against two Libyan airline employees who are said to have inserted the fatal suitcase into the inter-airline baggage handling system in Malta. The bag was allegedly transferred to Pan Am 103 in Frankfurt, and then

exploded over Scotland after the plane had left London for the Atlantic crossing.

When Libya refused to send the two accused men to Scotland for trial, the Western powers persuaded the U.N. Security Council to impose sanctions against Libya in 1992: no flights in or out, and no imports of oilfield equipment or arms. But in the past year the embargo has been crumbling, as various African leaders defiantly flew into Tripoli to congratulate Qadhafi on his 30th year in power — and at the same time, Britain has been re-thinking the case, and pulling the reluctant United States along.

The key move was in August 1997, when the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, persuaded Washington to agree that the two suspects could be tried in a "neutral venue." It would still have to be Scottish judges deciding the case under Scottish law, since Pan Am 103 had fallen on Scottish territory, and the suspects, if convicted, would have to serve their time in Barmine prison in Glasgow (though with U.N. personnel supervising them).

But no senior Libyan intelligence officers would be required to testify at the trial, and nobody would try to trace the orders for the bombing to Qadhafi himself. And you have to ask: why did Britain and the United States make this deal if they were really sure of their case? But the best way of answering this question is to ask it the other way around.

Why did Qadhafi finally agree to

send these two men to trial? The embargo was a great nuisance, but it did not fatally undermine the Libyan economy, and it was already leaking badly. And if Qadhafi really did order the bombing of Pan Am 103 as retaliation for the 1986 U.S. bombing of Libya, wasn't he afraid that these men, once out of Libya, would plea-bargain and incriminate him in the crime?

Understand Qadhafi's actions, and you understand almost everything. There are only two possible outcomes to the trial (which will not even start for many months), and they are both positive from his point of view.

If Fhimah and Meghrah are guilty, and if they are convicted, they will still not squeal and implicate Qadhafi, for their families remain in Libya. In that case, Qadhafi blames the outcome on the invincible anti-Arab prejudices of a Western court — and he is still freed from the U.N. sanctions, for now that they have been suspended, it would take the votes of Russia and China (who will not play) to reimpose them.

If the two Libyans are found innocent, or the case is simply thrown out of court after opening arguments, it gets even better for Qadhafi. And based on what is currently known about the Anglo-American case, this is quite possible, for the Anglo-American case seems to depend on the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence.

"If we were concerned with an ordinary crime committed on a

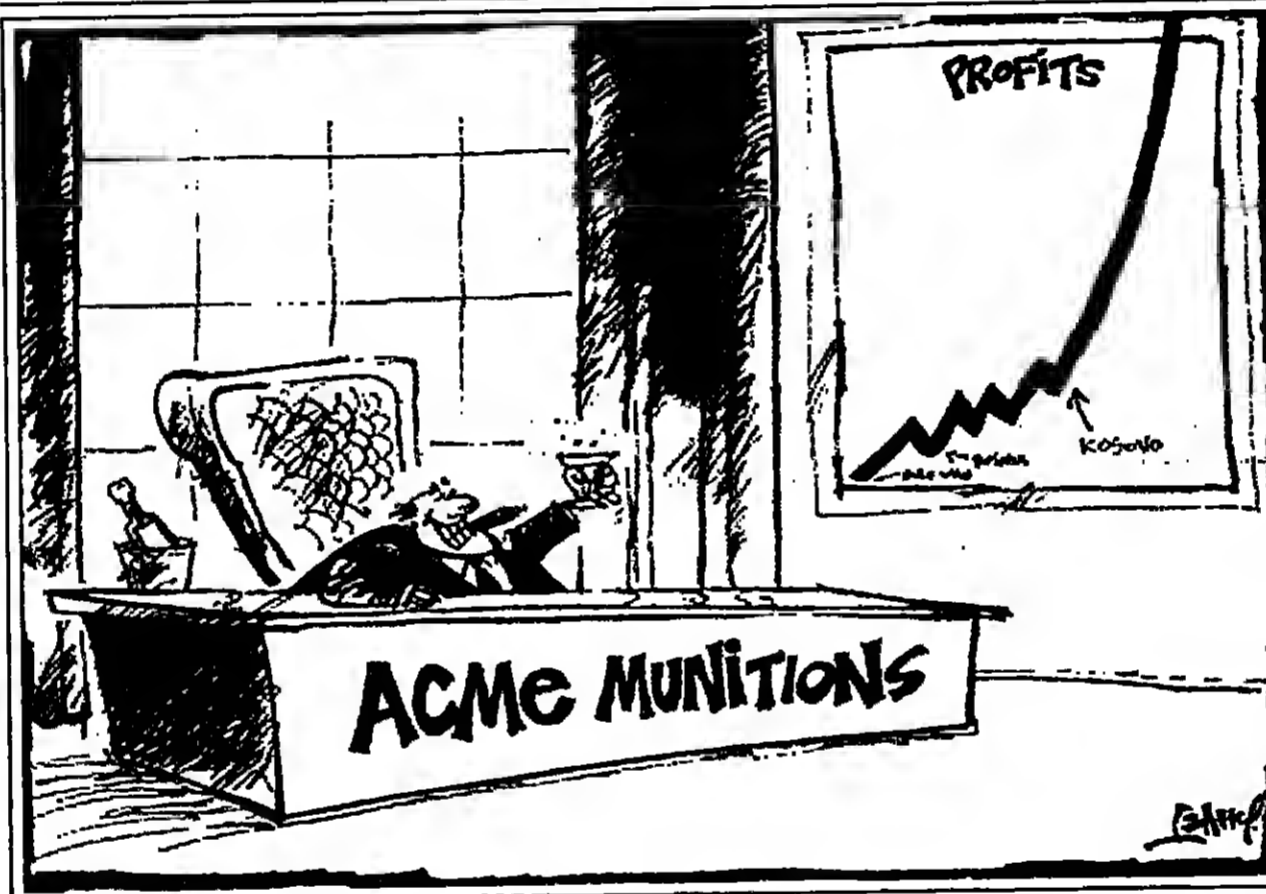
Friday or Saturday night anywhere in Scotland," says law professor Robert Black of the University of Edinburgh, who has been deeply involved since 1994 in the negotiations that led to the Libyan suspects' arrival in Holland on Monday, "the relevant prosecution authorities would have marked the papers 'no prosecution'."

The details need not detain us here, since they will all come out during the trial. But almost every item of prosecution evidence, from the provenance of the electronic timer that set off the bomb to the alleged identification of one of the Libyans accused by the Maltese shopkeeper who sold the suitcase, is plausibly disputed by the defence. (The shopkeeper, over 19 interviews, consistently described an older and taller man than either of the Libyans.)

There is, moreover, another plausible suspect: Iran, which in late 1988 was burning with resentment over the allegedly accidental shooting-down of an Iranian civil airliner over the Gulf by the U.S. warship "Vincennes." Ayatollah Khomeini, then still alive, had vowed vengeance, and an airliner for an airliner might have seemed an appropriate revenge to the young militants around him.

If I were a betting man... Never mind, but it will be an interesting trial — and there are no foregone conclusions.

The writer is an independent London-based journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries



The selective reality of war

WAR, AS one American general in World War II noted, is hell. It is hell for the kids of one country forced to fight against the kids of another. It is hell for the innocent civilians who have an uncanny tendency to become targets of bombs and bullets supposedly not intended for them. And, in the case of the current NATO-Yugoslavia campaign, it is hell for the truth.

It is ironic that in the so-called "Information Age" so few facts about the biggest armed conflict in Europe in over 50 years are making it out of Kosovo and Serbia. This is not to say that there is no information available. The media, Yugoslav, Western and international, are dishing out non-stop images, reports and commentary. But the public remains in the dark about what is really happening; events are subject to various types of treatment before they are suitable for presentation to the eyes of the world.

The problem facing those interested in cutting through the propaganda and disinformation surrounding NATO's bombing campaign and analysing the situation objectively is that there are no independent parties to report on what is happening in Yugoslavia. The OSCE pulled out its staff of observers before the bombing began. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic ordered all foreign journalists out of Kosovo and shut down the independent B92 radio station. NATO delivers its reports, often in a sketchy manner and without going into details, in Brussels and Washington, thousands of kilometres away from the theatre of operations. The only eyewitness accounts are those of the ethnic Albanian refugees, whose reports of systematic terror by the Serb police and military forces are too consistent to be doubted, at least by a public which has access to this information.

This set of circumstances proves very convenient indeed for an inveterate liar such as Milosevic. Only certain images make it out of Yugoslavia. In one part of the country, a refugee convoy is bombed, apparently by a NATO plane. Bring in the press that remains in Belgrade to document this tragedy. In another location, a village is emptied of its population by Serb forces and torched. In this instance, however, there is no coverage of the act. Or of the numerous NATO planes shot down. Or of the extreme

and extensive devastation wrought upon civilian Yugoslav installations and huge resulting casualties. Such employment of selective reality makes it difficult to believe anything coming out of Belgrade.

On the other hand, while NATO's spokesmen have a better track record of admitting mistakes than the just and infallible Yugoslav leadership, there are the issues of repeated mistakes and the language used in justifying the air operations. NATO's argument that its mission is humanitarian and is aimed at minimising civilian casualties is undermined by each "mistake" that kills Yugoslav citizens and the people it is purportedly protecting. The sanitised language of "collateral damage," "seduced" missiles and other neat phrases used by planners and generals is intended to instill a mindset in the public that war is not war, people don't die horrible deaths and lives and countries are not destroyed. It turns war into a holiday excursion or a walk in the park.

The propaganda lying on both pro- and anti-NATO camps does its part to obscure truth as well. U.S. President Bill Clinton and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder are portrayed as Hitler in the Chinese and Yugoslav press. Russian politicians evoke the country's historic ties to the Balkans to whip up anti-West feelings. Americans find it difficult to distinguish between Milosevic, the leader, and Yugoslavia, the country and the people, similar to American public perception of Saddam Hussein and Iraq. This situation leads to statements such as deployment of nuclear weapons and the possibility of World War III. It also leads to mistaken assessments like the one put forward by a Canadian politician, who suggested that armed conflict cannot solve humanitarian problems. It can, and did in Europe in the Second World War. It is difficult to believe that Hitler would have been persuaded to shut down the death camps in Nazi-controlled Europe by a few diplomatic communications issued from distant capitals.

The bottom line is that much of what is published and shown on television, and presented as the truth, about what is happening in Yugoslavia as a result of the NATO bombing campaign has to be taken on faith. You either believe it, or you don't. For pacifists, the conflicting media campaigns are not much of a problem: all violent conflicts

Out of Order



Brian Brown

are inherently wrong, and this includes both the Alliance's campaign and the alleged ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Serbian troops. For others, the issue is more complex. What constitutes an appropriate casus belli? When is it acceptable to step in and put innocent civilians at risk of death and injury, supposedly to save a greater number of innocent civilians? Does the concept of "violent pacification" work and is there such a thing as a "good" war? Are any such conditions even applicable to Yugoslavia, and if so, is NATO an appropriate vehicle for action? The most difficult question of all, though, is: how is it possible to answer these other questions without reliable information?

The modern media system allows everyone to have their say, but not everyone is telling the truth. Maybe no one. And what is true one day may not be true the next. So how does one choose who or which viewpoint to support, before history uses its advantage of 20/20 hindsight to render a more balanced judgement? Propaganda, ideology or lies: take your pick. And have faith.

RECOMMENDED READING: *Junkey*, by William Burroughs. A fictional account of one addict's life. *Junkey* draws on Burroughs' experience as a life-long drug user. A powerful account of the day-to-day, shot-to-shot existence of someone hooked on a dangerous and addictive substance. Set variously in New York, New Orleans and Mexico City, the novel also offers the underworld's perception of "straight" society.

Double standards, Kosovo and Israel

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

Columnists last week focused their attention on the NATO air strikes against Yugoslavia and on the Israeli media campaign against Jordan.

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneek argued that the Arabs are wasting their time discussing the NATO strikes against Yugoslavia. Some argue that the war was meant to protect the Kosovars from the crimes committed against them while others say the real cause is to force them out of their homeland, said Faneek. However, NATO did not

Yugoslavia in order to satisfy the Arabs or to prove that it does not have double standards. The sole reason for the strikes, Faneek argued, is that NATO wants to prove to the world that it will steer the world's policy from now on while the United Nations will be relegated to mere window dressing in the next century. The Arab World has no influence, and no option but to live with these realities. Although it is a negative position, it is the only option Arabs have, added Faneek.

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi blasted the United States for its double standards, because it claims that the attacks against Yugoslavia were prompted by Serb practices in the Balkan region and its desire to protect the Kosovars. Ironically, noted Rimawi, this is the same country which stands helpless against Israeli practices in Arab lands. Israel is driving Palestinians from their homes by confiscating their lands or rounding them up at gunpoint and forcing them out, yet the world's major power can do nothing to protect the Palestinians or even condemn Israel's heinous practices, said Rimawi.

Al Aswaq's Rasbid Hassan slammed Israel's foreign minister Ariel Sharon for supporting Milosevic in his policy in the Balkan region. Sharon's own practices against the Arabs during the past fifty years are now replicated by

Milosevic, said Hassan. They are two faces of the same coin, he said. Sharon is very happy to see around one million Muslims fleeing their homes and suffering the agony of displacement and hunger, said Hassan. Kosovars leaving their homes remind Sharon of what the Jewish gangs did to the Palestinians half a century ago when it drove around 800,000 Palestinians from their homes. Those gangs destroyed around 450 Palestinian villages in order to replace them with Israeli settlements, added Hassan. The writer complained that Sharon can say and do whatever he wants and nobody punishes him, or even protests against his atrocious actions.

Who else could perpetrate such crimes except the Zionists and those like them: the fascists, thundered the writer.

Al Dustour's Oreib Rintawi criticised the Israeli leaders for provoking Jordan with their statements in the Israeli media in order to drum up support during the election campaign. Israel, earlier this year, predicted that the Kingdom's future would become uncertain after the death of King Hussein and that the Kingdom will be destabilised. Then Israel announced that it would not give Jordan its share of the water as stipulated in the 1994 peace accord. Now the Israeli Army Radio is spreading rumours alleging Jordan's intention to release Ahmad Dakamseh, who killed a number of Israeli schoolgirls while on duty. The radio argues that Dakamseh should not be released because his hands are still bloody, said Rintawi. Yet, how may Israeli criminals who killed scores of Palestinians were released after spending only a little time in jail, asked the writer. Some of them were not even punished, he said. Jordan is not proud of what Dakamseh did, said Rintawi. But it burts our ego that some external power from west of the river is trying to dictate what Jordan is and isn't supposed to do, complained Rintawi.

Kurd clans warehouse of votes in Turkish polls

By Elif Unal
Reuters

PERCHED ON an isolated peak on Turkey's vast Mesopotamian plain, the imposing walls of a tribal castle dominate the landscape just as the tribe's chiefs lord it over surrounding Kurdish society.

Thousands of rural Kurds, squeezed between a bloody armed conflict and a deep poverty, are guided in the elections tomorrow by the advice of respected clan leaders and landlords.

The chateau home of the Turk clan — a large Kurdish family influential in the Derik district of the south-eastern Mardin Province — boasts embrasures in its walls and hefty iron doors that are locked and guarded by armed men at night.

Inhabitants of the clan's Kasr-i Kanco village gather in the smoky, half-lit saloon of a nearby building constructed for clan guests. They have come to offer condolences to one of the clan leaders, Ahmet Turk, who recently lost one of his two wives.

Politics is a part of life the gathering, as such events do, turns quickly to a discussion of Sunday's national and local elections.

"I have been in politics for years not because I am an aga (chief) but because of the people. If I disagreed with the people's will I could not survive," Turk says as his followers drink traditional bitter coffee, listening in silence.

Turk served as an MP for the now defunct Kurdish Party (DEP), but was later expelled from parliament and prosecuted on accusations of links with Kurdish separatist guerrilla Abdullah Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Ocalan, captured in Kenya, awaits trial in Istanbul for his role in a conflict that has killed over 29,000 in the south-east.

Ahmet's nephew, Besir, a PKK guerrilla, died near the Syrian border in 1990 in a shoot-out with Turkish troops. His elder brother was shot dead in 1973 in a clash with a rival clan.

This time the clan's parliamentary candidate is not Ahmet but his relative Ferhan Turk standing for the DEP's successor, the Peoples' Democracy Party (Hadeep).

Hadeep failed to pass a 10 per cent national threshold in 1995. But it is stronger in the south-east and could make inroads in local polls held parallel to national elections. General prosecutor Vural Savas, calling for ban on Hadeep last week, said this would be tantamount to terrorists entering government.

Despite his visible influence on the villagers, Turk said he did not think clans should marshal and direct the thousands of votes effectively at their disposal.

The tribes are deeply ingrained elements in Kurdish society and are a powerful force both in south-east Turkey and in neighbouring Kurdish-held northern Iraq.

In Turkey, successive governments have hesitated to bring in sweeping land reform. Tribal leaders by and large back the state. Their opponents, the PKK, espouse Marxist-Leninist doctrines of land distribution and have targeted Kurdish tribal chiefs from the outset of their campaign.

In Iraq where president Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party attempted land reform, it is the Kurdish tribes who head resistance to the state.

The infringements on tribal power brought about by the centralising policies of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, have sparked intermittent rebellions against Ankara by Kurdish tribal chiefs covetous of the local influence.

The struggle against the PKK has been an opportunity for the tribes to reassert that

power by taking advantage of the temporary weakness of the state and its needs.

Seeking local support, Turkey began to arm loyal tribes in 1985 recruiting them into 'village guard' militia, just as the Ottomans armed their ancestors to fight Armenian rebels.

"Tribes have their most powerful position in the south-east now in the republic's 75-year history, since some of them co-operated with the state and became village guards to fight the PKK," regional assembly deputy Hasim Hasimoglu told Reuters.

The PKK admits the village guards are one of the most effective weapons in the government's campaign against them.

The estimated 8,000-strong Batuyan clan in Simak's Cizre district is one such loyal tribe. Abdullah Demir, a Batuyan leader, is an independent parliamentary candidate.

Clan members say they back him to the hilt. "He is our master, our aga. He is a good man who looks after the poor," says 26-year-old Meryem, living in a dirty makeshift hut in Kumcati village with her four children.

Poverty in this region is perhaps the greatest friend of the PKK as it searches for support. But clan loyalty can prevail.

"We will vote for him," she adds as she prepares food — only tea and bread — for her children. Her family ekes out a meagre living from her husband's village guard salary of 50 million Turkish lira (\$150) a month.

Feyzullah Demir, himself a village guard, expects help from his chief. "When we elect him and send him to Ankara, we want him to work for our retirement rights and health."

The manpower of each tribe is estimated between 5,000 and 20,000. Hasimoglu dismisses accusations that the tribes are feudal and says the system is based on fair sharing of resources.



Turkish riot police detain a demonstrator during a pro-Kurdish party rally in the southeast Turkish city of Diyarbakir last week. Emergency rule authorities in Turkey's turbulent southeast banned a pro-Kurdish party rally and made hundreds of arrests in a clampdown before national and local polls (Reuters photo)

"It is not a feudal system at all. Generally everyone has their own land. But some villages belong to a single man. In that case the villagers and the owner of the village share the crop 50-50," he says.

But he does not rule out clan influence at the ballot box.

"Tribal chiefs never pressurise their members to vote for a party or a candidate. But because of loyalty and respect for them, they are able to provide a certain amount of votes."

Another regional deputy Mahmut Duyan describes relations in a tribe as similar to the relations in a family. "The clan is a big family which follows the word of its father or leader."

Duyan's father, leader of the Sinki clan, powerful in the Kiziltepe district of Mardin, backs his son. The elder Duyan, angered by former prime minister Tansu Ciller's Conservative Party which dropped Mahmut as candidate, put forward his younger son as independent.

"We'll teach her a lesson... We ourselves have some 8,000-9,000 votes and there are others who will support us," says the elderly Omer Sakir Duyan in their campaign office.

All parties are said to have attempted to earn clan votes.

But the rival conservative parties, The True Path and Motherland, are the two which have gained most support from the clans so far.

Local observers say the clans have been weakened by the loss of those who have fled from the armed conflict to the towns and cities. Many villages in the region were evacuated by the security forces in early 1990s in order to reduce local PKK support.

For now, however, the clans, like their castles, remain a bastion of social and political life in the Turkish south-east.

Lebanon dreams of bringing back its railways

By Jacques Lhuillier
Agence France Presse

THE LITTLE station in Baalbek in Lebanon's Bekaa valley has seen better days.

It was back in 1982 that its stationmaster, Georges, last saw a train passing through. But he still shows up at the little red-tiled station office, built by the French at the turn of the century.

The rails have rusted and are overgrown: the shutters of the buffet have gone rotten; the tank with its swivelling hose where the engines took on water has long since run dry. Three old steam locomotives gently rust away, forlornly waiting for someone to buy them.

Lebanon's 15-year civil war struck a body blow at the country's rail network.

But now plans are afoot to bring the rails back. The transport ministry has dusted down a 1994 study on the feasibility of reopening the coastal line from Tripoli in the north to Tyre in the south.

It will not be easy. The railways still own the land, but in the years since the last train passed that way hotels and holiday homes have mushroomed all down the seashore, in complete disregard of the law. The study, carried out by Sofrerail, a subsidiary of the French state railway, envisaged a dual track electrified line that would pass through Beirut. The cost was estimated as at least \$400 million.

The idea was that it would carry 260,000 passengers a day by 2015 — a not insignificant contribution to easing the capital's nightmarish traffic congestion.

"Ninety per cent of the study is still valid, and the rest just needs to be brought up to date. Canadian, Czech, Japanese and U.S. firms have been in the bidding for the job for the last month," Mohammed Hadi Abdel Aziz Baaj, an advisor to Transport Minister Najib Mikati, told AFP.

That still leaves the finance. The

Lebanese authorities hope they will find "friendly countries" to come up with grants, if they cannot attract foreign or private investors. The government is also considering linking up with the Syrian network.

Not that the narrow-gauge Beirut-Damascus line is likely to be brought back into service. It was built in the early part of the century to carry goods — mainly Jordanian phosphate — between Lebanon and the Arab hinterland, and times have changed too much since then. But there is talk of rehabilitating the line between Rayak, a rail hub in the heart of the Bekaa, and the Syrian town of Homs for freight traffic.

And more ambitiously, Mikati has raised the possibility of a line through Syria and Iraq, linking Beirut with Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

For some people, such plans hark back to the dreams of earlier railway builders.

At the turn of the century, the French

conceived the idea of linking Europe and Africa, with a line from Turkey to Egypt, passing through Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. The only section they managed to build was the stretch between Rayak and Aleppo, in northern Syria.

During World War II, British troops made their contribution to Lebanon's network.

Twisted rails lie half buried in the

sand or overgrown by weeds all along Lebanon's coast bearing silent testimony to their efforts, and to a time when trains ran freely from Tripoli to the Palestinian port city of Haifa, before the state of Israel was created.

But the transport ministry asserts firmly that its plans are not a throwback to the past, whatever some dreamers might think. "A railway is absolutely essential for the country, and a top pri-

ority for us," said one official.

Meanwhile back in Baalbek, Georges, who long ago swapped his smart station master's cap for a little woolly hat, oversees arrivals and departures of buses serving the Bekaa valley.

But he hasn't given up on his dream of seeing trains passing through Baalbek again. And he keeps going to his station. "To make sure they don't steal the rails," he explained.



Algerian women in traditional dress leave a polling station guarded by armed police in a village near Algiers, Thursday. Voter turnout some seven hours into Algeria's one-candidate presidential vote was 36.41 per cent of the electorate after six of the seven candidates collectively withdrew Wednesday from the presidential race saying they had proof of ballot-rigging (Reuters photo)

Islamic conservatives stand in way of Saudi tourism drive

By Habib Trabelsi
Agence France Presse

SAUDI ARABIA aims to launch a tourism drive to diversify revenue sources but its efforts are being blocked by Islamic conservatives.

"It's better to die than to embark on tourism, which is a source of depravation and insecurity," warned Ahmad Turkistani, a professor at Riyadh's Islamic University.

He raised the alarm after the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised a forum on tourism under the patronage of Mecca's governor, Prince Majed Ben Abdel Aziz.

Experts and businessmen at the forum held in March called for the creation of a tourism department or ministry and for pilgrims to Islam's holiest sites in nearby Mecca to be allowed to visit other parts of the Gulf Arab kingdom.

"It's time to correct our stand on tourism. In future, it should play an appropriate role in the national economy," said Prince Majed.

Abdel Mohsen Al Hakir, head of a tourism committee set up by businessmen in the late 1980s, said the kingdom could cope with almost 12

million Muslim pilgrims a year, up from the current figure of seven million.

"They can contribute towards developing tourism," he said.

Hakir, himself a major force behind tourism projects, said the sector could turn into Saudi Arabia's second biggest money-spinner after oil, overtaking industry and agriculture.

Saudi Arabia, which sits atop the world's largest oil reservoir, has invested more than 25 billion riyals (\$6.66 billion) in tourism projects since 1995.

It has almost 330 hotels with a total of 30,000 rooms, with the main infrastructure in place in the fertile province of Asir near Yemen, in the western resort of Taif, and in Yanbu on the Red Sea.

But Saudi Arabia does not issue visas for tourism, a subject which raises eyebrows among the conservatives who fear an influx of tourists would damage Islamic values and customs.

Muslim visitors spend an estimated \$1.66 billion while domestic tourism generates almost another \$400 million a year.

The figures pale in comparison with

the huge sums spent by Saudis abroad, notably in Europe, anywhere between five and \$15 billion a year, according to estimates from the Saudi union of chambers of commerce.

More than four million Saudis travel abroad for their holidays, especially to escape the summer inferno.

"For the last 12 years, we've been stressing at every conference that the tourism industry is a vital source of national revenue, but without any response," Hakir said.

And yet, he said, Saudi businessmen have invested more than \$500 billion abroad.

"We should first invest inside the country," he said, while acknowledging that such ventures were risky given the absence of any national body to protect tourism investments.

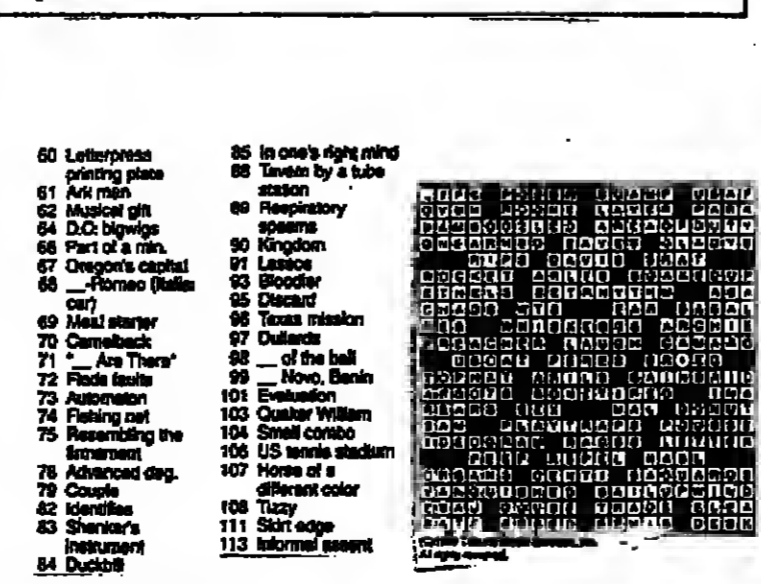
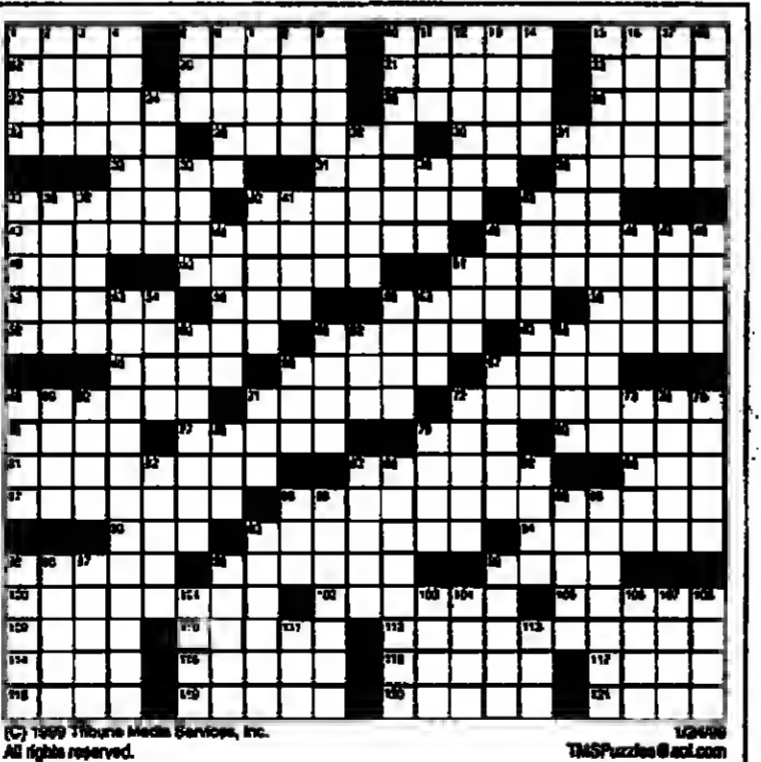
Faced with the refusal of Saudi theologians to concede any ground to western influences, Hakir said the kingdom should promote its own brand of "clean, family tourism".

He said the sector could achieve three objectives: boost the economy, compensate for low oil prices, and create jobs for Saudi Arabia's growing number of young school-leavers.

The Saturday Crossword

MYSTERY ROSTER
By Edgar Fontaine, Dighton, Massachusetts

- ACROSS
- 1 Glandular fever, for short
 - 5 These opposed
 - 10 Cry out excitedly
 - 15 Old crones
 - 18 President's middle name
 - 20 Animal leather
 - 21 Opening letters
 - 22 Israeli airline
 - 23 One of Christ's sleuths
 - 25 Mechanical routines
 - 26 Solemn ceremony
 - 27 Mr. Rogers St. Johns
 - 28 Swerved
 - 30 Basset
 - 32 Raggedy doll
 - 34 Recurrence
 - 36 Answer anyway?
 - 37 Frosh cap
 - 40 Copper shears
 - 42 Computer in '2001: A Space Odyssey
 - 43 Colin Claster's Chief Inspector
 - 45 Viscous dish
 - 49 CD add-on?
 - 50 Outlanders
 - 51 Dashed
 - 52 Harriet's sleuth
 - 53 Gather gradually
 - 55 Club Soccer unit
 - 56 Redacts
 - 58 Woodwind instrument
 - 59 Shed for the beach
 - 61 Approaches
 - 62 Legal proceedings
 - 65 Verbal situation
 - 66 Glides high
 - 67 Chainyout
 - 68 "The Little Mermaid" lyricist
 - 71 Long (for)
 - 72 Alternatives to garages
 - 76 Gash
 - 77 En
 - 79 Chum
 - 80 Baby deliverer?
 - 81 Robert's sander
 - 82 Doctor
 - 83 Items in reserve
 - 85 Reddish-brown horse
 - 87 Give a hand
 - 88 Raymond Chandler's gumshoe
 - 92 London bus
 - 93 Eric Clapton's
- DOWN
- 14 In good order
 - 15 Wineskin
 - 16 Small type
 - 19 Slice of angu
 - 20 Shut away from the world
 - 22 Secret prot.
 - 23 Myronianica
 - 24 Steak order
 - 26 Benefactor's tale
 - 27 Ride Safety
 - 28 Gardener's lawyer
 - 29 Singing brothers
 - 30 Drama line
 - 31 Come together
 - 32 Native of Bangkok
 - 33 Cassy
 - 34 Conditions
 - 36 Eavesdropper
 - 37 Mailed
 - 38 DOWN
 - 39 Boys painting
 - 40 "The Naked City"
 - 41 Toward the mouth
 - 42 Mary's one
 - 43 Lie sideways
 - 45 After the style of
 - 46 Full of chutzpah
 - 47 Placed
 - 48 Man of Capri
 - 49 Hotel chain
 - 50 Prison managers
 - 51 TV-come channel
 - 52 Group of eight
 - 53 Dramatist Clifford
 - 54 Palm in the neck
 - 55 Doctor's Belgian sleuth
 - 56 Smiler
 - 57 Microsoft mogul
 - 58 Snow-day roses
 - 59 Excessive enthusiasm
 - 60 Eastern rulers
 - 61 Culture media
 - 62 City in Transylvania
 - 63 String negative
 - 64 Mess of ice
 - 65 "Car"
 - 66 Madison Ave. guys
 - 67 Nosed into
 - 68 Gate ending
 - 69 Fat rodent
 - 70 Adolescent
 - 71 Common rodent
 - 72 au them
 - 73 Referred to
 - 74 Golf-ball holders
 - 75 Fact, member
 - 76 P.D. James' poet
 - 77 Nothing Sp.
 - 78 Deserve
 - 79 MDS
 - 80 Letterpress printing place
 - 81 Art man
 - 82 Musical gift
 - 83 D.C. dwigs
 - 84 Part of a min.
 - 85 Oregon's capital
 - 86 "Fleming (Bella) Carl"
 - 87 Novel starter
 - 88 Cemetery
 - 89 "Are There?"
 - 90 "Now, Benin"
 - 91 Evaluation
 - 92 Quarter William
 - 93 Small combo
 - 94 US tennis stadium
 - 95 Hore of a different color
 - 96 Tuzi
 - 97 Skirt edge
 - 98 Informal agent



Jordan wins \$220 million in IMF loans to fund reforms

WASHINGTON (R) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved \$220 million in loans to help Jordan fund a three-year programme of reform and offset problems caused by lower exports due to rising tension in the Middle East.

An IMF spokesman said Jordan would receive \$61 million immediately, including \$46 million designed to ease problems caused by the lower exports. The remainder of the loan would be paid over the period to 2001, if reforms stayed on track.

The package, including fiscal and monetary stabilisation and promises on major structural reforms, targets growth of 3.5 per cent by 2001 after sluggish performances in recent years.

"The overall macro-economic objectives of the programme are to steadily raise economic growth, maintain low inflation and strengthen the international reserves position," said Jordan's memorandum on economic

and financial policies 1999-2001, excerpts of which were obtained by Reuters in Amman.

The programme also calls for major improvements in state budget transparency by bringing government accounts and non-budgeted expenditure into the budget.

Officials say approval of the IMF programme will help Jordan's efforts to reschedule its debt to the Paris Club of country creditors in talks expected in May. Jordan is seeking a rescheduling of up to \$800 million in principal and interest payments over the three-year course of the loan.

Finance Minister Michel Marto told Reuters in Amman Thursday that a three-year reform package agreed with the IMF would get the country back on the path of accelerating economic growth of more than four per cent by 2001.

Jordan and the IMF agreed last month to the plan, after weeks of negotiations on fiscal and monetary targets and ways of

advancing major structural reforms designed to rejuvenate the economy.

The programme's policies envisage growth improving to at least 3.4 per cent by 2001, to match Jordan's current population growth. This is against 2.2 per cent gross domestic product growth at market prices in 1998.

"This is a conservative estimate and we want to do more," Marto said, referring to the plan's growth projection by 2001.

The programme would impose tough fiscal restraint and monetary stabilisation while accelerating economic reform to spur local and foreign investment to raise the economy's overall efficiency and trigger export-led growth.

"It lays the ground for implementing the proper policies needed for sustained growth," Marto said.

"The programme focuses on implementing sound fiscal and monetary policies which promote the participation of the private sector and reduce the role of the

public sector and intensifies structural reforms," he added.

Jordan's economy, weighed down by the heavy external debt service burden, has seen real incomes erode as its modest growth was unable to match an annual population growth of over three per cent. Growth and exports have been hampered by regional uncertainty.

"The government's primary objective is to increase economic growth so that per capita incomes rise," said Marto, stressing the programme's impact on job generation and reducing unemployment and poverty.

On the fiscal side, the programme targets by 2001 scaling down the budget deficit to only 1.4 per cent of GDP if grants which are calculated as revenues are included.

"Our eventual aim is to reach a balanced budget with no fiscal burdens or distortions," Marto added.

Marto said Jordan was set to meet its deficit target of seven per cent of GDP this

year against 9.6 per cent, excluding grants, last year. This was being attained by fiscal restraint, a prudent monetary policy and cuts in expenditure while boosting revenues.

The programme implements for the first time major advances in its transparency and coverage by bringing previously unaccounted government accounts and non-budgeted expenditure into the budget.

It also targets maintaining inflation low in the range of 2-3 per cent. Year-on-year consumer price index inflation rose to 4.5 per cent in 1998 against three per cent in 1997.

It foresees a buildup in the country's international reserves to about \$1.7 billion, equivalent to five months' imports, from a projected \$1.191 billion at end of 1999.

The programme would give Jordan an extra \$250 million a year in financing from an EFF (extended fund facility) and another compensatory and contingency financing facility (CCFF) to

offset a shortfall in exports due to tensions in the Middle East.

The programme is geared to supporting the dinar's exchange rate, pegged to the dollar since October 1995.

The IMF agrees that this is to be maintained until regional factors allow a more flexible exchange rate regime.

Officials say the approval of the IMF programme will help Jordan's efforts to reschedule its Paris Club debt in upcoming talks

including a new strategy by

Jordan is seeking a rescheduling of up to \$800 million in principal and interest payments due over the three-year course of the programme.

"We expect that Jordan will get a debt rescheduling of around \$800 million over the three years," Marto said.

The programme plans to accelerate Jordan's privatisation and sell-offs of state assets along with reform of its public sector administration. It sets timetables

including a new strategy by end of June to privatise the state telecommunications firm after the cancellation of the sale of 40 per cent to a foreign strategic investor last October.

Other major steps to be concluded in 1999 will include steps to create a debt free subsidiary of the state airline Royal Jordanian, privatising power generation and distribution, and government divestment of its holdings of shares in listed industrial firms.

Israel treasury opposes free-trade zone decision

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's treasury Thursday said the Ministerial Legislative Committee's approval of a free-trade zone that would grant tax breaks to overseas trading companies would create a tax haven and few jobs.

Trading companies will take advantage of the tax advantages, but companies like these can have one or

two employees or just consist of a mailbox," treasury spokesman Aviram Cohen said.

On Wednesday, the Ministerial Legislative Committee approved in principle the establishment of a free-trade zone in the Likud industrial park in the Negev region that would grant tax benefits for up to eight years to international man-

ufacturers as well as trading companies.

The original proposal would have limited the benefits to manufacturers only.

Ahaz Ben-Ari, director of the Free-Trade Zones Council, said the law had to be amended to attract business to Israel at a time of slower growth and a standstill in the Middle East peace process.

"Israel's attractiveness to international companies is not what it was when we began talking about this project," Ben-Ari said. "Even if 30 companies employing 15 workers come, that's more than 400 new jobs."

Ben-Ari said the final legislation would include certain conditions that would guarantee jobs would be

created. He said the conditions could obligate the companies to move their headquarters to Likud and commit to employing a minimum number of workers.

Cohen said Israel's parliament still had to approve the law and he did not expect the vote to take place before the May 17 general election.

Japan strikes back at critical U.S. trade report

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan struck back Friday at an official U.S. report criticising its closed markets, describing it as a disappointing, one-sided misinterpretation of the facts.

The Japanese government submitted its rebuttal of the U.S. Trade Representative's National Trade Estimate (NTE) report to the U.S. embassy here, said a foreign ministry official.

Some of the April 1 U.S. trade report was accurate, Tokyo conceded in the written rebuttal.

"However, in many parts of the NTE report, we observe that the argument is marked by a one-sided view and misinterpretations of the facts; it is to our great disappointment that such a report has been published,"

the Japanese government said.

The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) report pledged to exert further pressure on Japan to deregulate its economy.

The United States "will continue to press Japan to implement further concrete deregulation measures" in such sectors as telecommunications, medical devices, housing, financial services and energy, it said.

But in the latest of a series of attacks on the USTR, Japan complained that the U.S. report had pointed to the low foreign share in several Japanese market sectors and concluded there were barriers hindering access.

"In reality, market share is determined by a wide

variety of factors, particularly demand structures and the effort suppliers make to market their products," the Japanese rebuttal said.

"Adopting result-oriented approach is not consistent with international rule based on free trade," it argued.

The Japanese argument also criticised the U.S. use of the word "press" to describe its pressure on Japan to open its markets.

"Regarding the word 'press' used in several parts of the report, one-sided expression such as one country pressing the other is not appropriate since every country is on an equal footing with each other," Tokyo said.

The war of words in U.S.-Japan trade ties has escalat-

ed in past months, particularly for steel, as Washington warned Tokyo it must not seek to export its way out of its economic Malaise.

Instead, U.S. officials insisted, Japan must boost domestic demand and deregulate the economy not only to allow in outside competition but also to maintain growth over the longer term.

The U.S. administration, responding to warnings from its steelmakers that their future is endangered by a flood of cheap imports, have invoked U.S. trade laws to announce "anti-dumping" duties on shipments from Japan and Brazil.

U.S. trade authorities determined that bot-rolled

steel imports from Japan, Brazil and Russia had been entering the United States at "dumping" prices, that is, well below cost of production.

But Japanese steel exports to the United States have dropped off sharply this year after surging late in 1998.

And Japan's overall current account surplus in February tumbled 32.2 per cent from a year earlier to 1,111.9 billion yen (\$9.3 billion), the first drop in three months, according to official figures this week.

Tokyo in its latest rebuttal rejected U.S. descriptions of its deregulation efforts as "modest," and insisted that its import tariffs were consistent with World Trade Organisation rules.

Exchange Rates Thursday, 18-04-99

Currency	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1838	0.1927	1.8780	1.8779	0.1945	2.2898	0.2074	0.7080
BAHRAIN DINAR	5.2973	1.0000	1.0208	9.9483	9.9477	1.0301	12.1297	1.0884	3.7509
SAUDI DINAR	5.1863	0.9798	1.0000	9.7454	9.7448	1.0091	11.8823	1.0780	3.6740
QATAR DINAR	0.9325	0.1005	0.1028	1.0000	1.0000	1.0036	1.2183	0.1154	0.1170
OMAN RIAL	0.5325	0.1005	0.1028	1.0001	1.0000	1.0036	1.2183	0.1154	0.1170
QATAR RIAL	5.1427	0.9798	0.9910	0.9578	0.9573	1.0000	11.7755	1.0693	3.6410
KUWAIT DINAR	0.4567	0.0824	0.0842	0.8332	0.8331	1.0000	10.0000	0.9008	3.0882
LIBYAN DINAR	4.8227	0.9104	0.9254	0.8570	0.8568	0.9378	11.0430	1.0000	3.4145
LIBYAN LIRA	21.2147	4.0048	4.0862	39.8408	39.8387	4.1252	48.5770	4.3988	15.0200
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2688	0.2722	2.6525	2.6524	0.2748	3.2342	0.2928	1.0000
EURO	0.8731	0.1652	0.1688	1.6434	1.6434	0.1702	2.0038	0.1815	0.6196
SWISS FRANK	2.5573	0.4828	0.4929	4.8027	4.8024	0.4973	5.8558	0.5303	1.8108
GERMAN MARK	2.0872	0.3868	0.4041	4.0325	4.0323	0.4078	4.8225	0.4340	1.4848
FRANCE FRANC	6.5771	1.0191	1.0201	10.1077	10.1068	1.0208	12.3307	1.1785	4.0728
ITALY LIRA	1.8782	0.3188	0.3234	3.1517	3.1516	0.3263	3.8428	0.3480	1.1882
HOLLAND Guilder	2.8814	0.5438	0.5503	5.4111	5.4109	0.5503	6.5977	0.5975	2.0400
SPAIN PESA	11.6722	2.2034	2.2403	21.9202	21.9100	2.2897	28.7287	2.4202	8.2638
ITALY LIRA	25.3177	4.7793	4.8788	47.5402	47.5402	4.8231	57.0710	5.2486	17.3048
GERMAN MARK	52.7472	0.9573	1.0164	99.0584	99.0531	1.0208	123.7794	10.9372	37.3450
FRANCE FRANC	2.2671	0.4004	0.4202	4.1825	4.1822	0.4232	5.0808	0.4618	1.5782
NETHERLANDS Guilder	4.2448	0.8013	0.8180	7.0714	7.0709	0.8254	9.7183	0.8801	3.0022
CYPRUS POUND	7.4586	0.1413	0.1443	1.4058	1.4058	1.4566	1.7141	1.5552	0.5300
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	17.9912	3.3983	3.4870	33.7873	33.7855	3.4084	41.9880	3.7305	12.3778
CANADA DOLLAR	2.1144	0.3981	0.4075	3.9708	3.9706	0.4112	4.8415	0.4384	1.4870
RUSSIA RUBLE	1.3070	0.2487	0.2519	2.4544	2.4543	0.2541	2.9928	0.2710	0.8293

Currency	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6140	0.5823	0.5735	0.1647	0.8416	0.4802	5.5788	1.0807
EURO	0.5198	1.0000	0.3422	0.4173	0.1020	0.5214	0.3037	3.4585	0.6896
SWISS FRANK	1.8106	2.9223	1.0000	1.2184	0.2862	1.5238	0.8875	10.1010	1.8987
NETHERLANDS Guilder	1.4845	2.3885	0.8201	1.0000	0.2445	1.2486	0.7728	8.2544	1.6048
FRANCE FRANC	0.0728	0.8012	0.3338	0.4088	0.1000	0.5108	0.2978	33.6780	6.5627
JAPAN YEN	118.8200	191.7755	65.8247	80.0242	19.5968	1.0000	58.2481	682.8788	128.4088
HOLLAND Guilder	2.0400	3.2628	1.1287	1.3738	0.3358	1.7198	1.0000	11.3889	2.1738
NETHERLANDS Guilder	1.2588	13.3378	4.5842	5.5807	1.3607	6.9583	4.0088	48.1529	8.5038
ITALY LIRA	17.8248	28.8028	9.8000	12.0723	2.9018	15.0808	8.7887	1.0000	19.3714
NETHERLANDS Guilder	37.3480	60.2748	20.8258	25.1515	6.1488	31.4288	18.3804	208.3415	40.3887
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5798	2.5448	0.8709	1.0822	0.2897	1.3270	0.7728	8.7888	1.7040
NETHERLANDS Guilder	3.0082	4.8504	1.8988	2.0240	0.4848	2.5282	1.4731	18.7885	3.2407
CYPRUS POUND	0.5300	0.8854	0.2827	0.3670	0.0973	0.4481	0.2688	3.8888	0.8728
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.7378	20.2688	7.0851	8.5794	2.0878	10.7232	6.2440	71.0838	12.7887
CANADA DOLLAR	1.4870	2.4182	0.8288	1.0282	0.2488	1.2988	0.7388	8.3815	1.6178
RUSSIA RUBLE	0.8233	1.4838	0.5111	0.6232	0.1524	0.7788	0.4588	5.3822	1.0500

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

Currency	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000	1000
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.6140	0.5823	0.5735	0.1647	0.8416	0.4802	5.5788	1.0807
EURO	0.5198	1.0000	0.3422	0.4173	0.1020	0.5214	0.3037	3.4585	0.6896
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NETHERLANDS Guilder	3.0082	4.8504	1.8988	2.0240	0.4848	2.5282	1.4731	18.7885	3.2407
CYPRUS POUND	0.5300	0.8854	0.2827	0.3670	0.0973	0.4481	0.2688	3.8888	0.8728
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.7378	20.2688	7.0851	8.5794	2.0878	10.7232	6.2440	71.0838	12.7887
CANADA DOLLAR	1.4870	2.4182	0.8288	1.0282	0.2488	1.2988	0.7388	8.3815	1.6178
RUSSIA RUBLE	0.8233	1.4838	0.5111	0.6232	0.1524	0.7788	0.4588	5.3822	1.0500

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

NOTE: NEITHER CREDIT NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS									
DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES CUBIA									
CURRENCY		1 YEAR		3 MONTH		6 MONTH		9 MONTH	
US DOLLAR	1.00	4.0000	4.7500	4.7500	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
EUROPEAN STERLING	1.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000	4.0000
LIBOR	3.0000	2.0000	2.5000	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000
EUROPEAN MARK	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
1 YEAR	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
3 MONTH	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
6 MONTH	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
9 MONTH	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Orthodoxi qualify to Asian Clubs Championship

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Al Orthodoxi, the Kingdom's basketball champions, Thursday clinched the 2nd West Asian Basketball Championship title to qualify to the Asian Clubs Championship which will be held in Beirut May 22-29.

They beat Palestine's Al Quds 78-58 in the last match of the event in which only three teams competed although the tournament was due to have brought together 7 teams.

It was the third time Al Orthodoxi qualified to the finals but their task was made easier this time by the loss of its serious rivals when title favourites, Lebanese champions Al Hikma, pulled out of the event and were followed by Iran's Baykan, Syria's Al Wihdeh and Yemen's Al Mina.

Al Orthodoxi clinched the sole qualifying berth to the finals after beating Iraq's Air Defence team 100-73. The Iraqi team had beat Palestinian team 87-71.

Joined by some national team players on their line-up to prepare the team for the upcoming Pan-Arab Games, Al Orthodoxi only managed a 34-28 win

in the first half. But coach Murad Barakat was satisfied with overall performance and said his club would host a major European team before heading to Beirut for the finals.

Al Hikma, Arab champions for the last two years, with professional players on the team, cited injuries on their lineup and preferred to stay away from the competition having automatically qualified to the Asian Clubs Championship as hosts of the finals which will include 10 titleholding Asian teams: the top four from the last championship, one each from the ABC's five zones and the host nation.

The top Asian teams will be Al Hikma, Al Orthodoxi, the champion teams of South Korean, Chinese Taipei, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and the Gulf Champion.

Al Orthodoxi and Al Ahli both previously represented the Kingdom in the Asian Clubs Championship.

Al Orthodoxi finished 5th among 7 teams in 3rd championship in 1988 but it was Al Ahli who secured the best result with a fourth place finish in 1995 when they took part in the 6th championship in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Al Orthodoxi took part in the 7th

championship in the Philippines finishing 7th among 8 teams.

Jordan's 1997 champions Al Jazireh hosted the 1st West Asian Qualifiers last year but Al Riyadi clinched the qualifying berth to the 9th Asian finals playing against Al Mina, Al Wihdeh and Iran's Zobohan.

The West Asian Championship was initiated with the formation of Asian Basketball Confederation's (ABC) West Asia Zone last year and three championships have been held so far. The women's and the U-18 youth's tournaments and the 1st West Asian Championship in which five teams took part.

The International Basketball Federation, FIBA, has approved for the champion club of Asia to participate in the McDonalds Championship which will be held in Italy later this year.

The McDonalds Championship, a high-level tourney, groups the world's top teams including the NBA champion, two teams from Europe, one team from South America and the best team from Oceania. From now on, the Asian champion will take part in the annual event biennially.

Krajicek knocked out of Japan Open

TOKYO (AFP) — Top seed Richard Krajicek became the biggest casualty of the week when he fell victim to Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden in the quarterfinals of the Japan Open tennis tournament on Friday.

The 1996 Wimbledon champion from the Netherlands, the winner in London and Key Biscayne last month, found it tough to play his favourite serve and volley game and fell 3-6, 7-5, 6-1.

"I was feeling a little bit tired today, especially in the second set. I thought I would make the point shorter and go for my shots a little bit more ... it was windy, so it was difficult to control," said Krajicek.

"So I was taking too much risk. I was rushing to keep the point short — that was basically what happened."

Krajicek said he could not hit his second serve well enough to play his serve and volley game, saying: "It looked like suicide playing second serve and volley."

"Normally 50 to 70 per cent I'd like to play serve and volley on a second serve. Today I was always rallying ... it was a different kind of tennis than I'm used to playing."

Although Krajicek hit 11 aces, he committed four double faults and won only 11 points out of 36 on his second serve.

Meanwhile, Bjorkman said: "I was returning pretty good from the start of the second set, so I was able to return even better in the third set. And then, he started to get down a bit."

"I think he was just playing worse than me, but neither of us played great. I felt like I was struggling with my serve and couldn't get any free points," added Bjorkman.

Earlier, Nicolas Kiefer needed a tough two hours 51 minutes to blow away third-seeded Thomas Enqvist of Sweden 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-4 in a series of hard-hit baseline rallies for a place in the next round against Bjorkman.

"Today, I think it was important that I served very good and I changed my game a little bit from the baseline. I hit some slow shots, some fast shots," said Kiefer, 21.

"It was very difficult to make the last point. I had to stay in the match and I did it very well. I broke him straight back each time in the first set ... it's very important against these guys," he added.

The other semifinal match will be played between fourth seed Thomas Johansson of Sweden and seventh seed Wayne Ferreira of South Africa.

Johansson eased aside Sebastien Lareau of Canada 6-1, 6-4, while Ferreira outplayed Kenneth Carlsen of Denmark 3-6, 6-2, 6-3.



German tennis player Nicolas Kiefer returns the ball to Thomas Enqvist of Sweden during their quarter-final match in the Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo Friday. Fifth-seeded Kiefer defeated third-seeded Enqvist 6-7 (5/7), 7-5, 6-4 (AFP photo)



Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands shows his disappointment as he loses a point during the quarterfinal match against Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden in the Japan Open tennis tournament in Tokyo. Top-seeded Krajicek was defeated by eighth-seeded Bjorkman 6-3, 5-7, 1-6 (AFP photo)



Swedish tennis player Jonas Bjorkman returns the ball to Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands.

Blatter backs 2006 African World Cup bid

ZURICH (AFP) — Sepp Blatter, president of world football governing body FIFA, on Friday threw his support behind Africa hosting the 2006 World Cup finals.

Africa has never hosted the event and Blatter, says the continent deserves a chance provided it meets stringent requirements.

He pointed out that solidarity was needed between African countries if this dream was to be realised. At present five African countries, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Morocco and Egypt, have expressed an interest in hosting 2006 World Cup finals.

"It would be good for the 2006 World Cup to go to an African country," said Blatter.

"I can't give an answer on the chances of Nigeria or any other country. It's up to the Executive Committee to decide. However, it would be nice if the World Cup went to an African country," he added.

Blatter was speaking during a conference here on Friday announcing the publication of a harmonised international calendar of football events.

The calendar will be presented during the draw for the 2002 World Cup qualifiers in Tokyo later this year and will come into effect in January 2005.

World Youth Cup Mexico dethrone Cup holders in fiery encounter

IBADAN (AFP) — The Mexican youth football team scored four second-half goals here on Thursday as they ended Argentina's hopes of a third successive World Youth Cup title with a 4-1 thrashing in their second round match — both sides finished with 10 men.

Mexico, who will meet Japan here on Sunday in the quarterfinals after the Japanese scraped through on penalties against Portugal earlier in the day, came from a goal down to seal their convincing win over the South Americans, who had a disappointing tournament scoring just two goals in their four matches.

Argentina seized the lead in the 41st minute when Luciano Galletti netted, although the evening was to end on a sour note for him as he received his marching orders from Belarus referee

Sergei Shmolik for a terrible tackle on Gerardo Torrado — Mexican captain Rafael Marquez also went for an early shower after he jostled Galletti following the injury-time incident.

The Mexicans levelled seven minutes into the second-half when Daniel Osorno headed home a right wing cross and three minutes later another header by striker Eduardo Rodriguez put them ahead.

Stayed at the baseline but Costa dominated with a strong forehand and serve. "I am not feeling comfortable yet on clay this season and I am not serving well," Rios said. "Costa is a great player and he was strong today."

Rios, who has had back problems, said he felt fine Friday and is now looking forward to the Monte Carlo Open next week.

The rain delay was good news for Carlos Moya, who used the time to nurse a badly infected thumb.

He needed 2 hours, 38 minutes to beat countryman Juan Carlos Ferrero 7-5, 5-7, 6-4 and advance to a quarterfinal meeting with fellow Spaniard Felix Mantilla, who beat

World Youth Cup quarter-final line-up (all matches to be played on Sunday):

- Lagos: Uruguay v Brazil
- Ibadan: Mexico v Japan
- Kaduna: Ghana v Spain
- Enugu: Mali v Nigeria

Two excellent efforts rounded off the Mexican's fiesta night with Juan Pablo Rodriguez firing in a fierce shot from the edge of the area and Luis Gonzalez produced a delightful lob for the coup de grace.

Spain also progressed building a 3-0 lead after just 33 minutes and running out 3-2 winners over the United States — they will meet Ghana in the quarterfinals.

Mali completed the quarter-final line-up when they defeated Cameroon 5-4 with a golden goal in extra-time having come back from 4-2 down with just 14 minutes left on the clock — their reward is a meeting with hosts Nigeria, who scraped through on penalties against the Republic of Ireland on Wednesday.

Costa beats Rios, Moya advances in Barcelona

BARCELONA (AP) — Albert Costa took only 51 minutes to rout Chilean Marcelo Rios 6-4, 6-1 on Friday in a rain-delayed third-round match at the \$950,000 Open Seat Conde de Godo.

The victory sent the Spaniard, winner of last week's Estoril open, into a quarterfinal match later Friday with Morocco's Karim Alami, who defeated American Vincent Spadea 6-3, 6-3.

A dozen third-round matches were postponed when rain wiped out Thursday's play, forcing the winners to play twice Friday.

When play got underway Friday, Costa broke Rios' serve in the third game of the first set and looked strong throughout the match. Both players

stayed at the baseline but Costa dominated with a strong forehand and serve.

"I am not feeling comfortable yet on clay this season and I am not serving well," Rios said. "Costa is a great player and he was strong today."

Rios, who has had back problems, said he felt fine Friday and is now looking forward to the Monte Carlo Open next week.

The rain delay was good news for Carlos Moya, who used the time to nurse a badly infected thumb.

He needed 2 hours, 38 minutes to beat countryman Juan Carlos Ferrero 7-5, 5-7, 6-4 and advance to a quarterfinal meeting with fellow Spaniard Felix Mantilla, who beat

Italy's Renzo Furlan 6-3, 6-0.

Defending champion Todd Martin of the United States beat a 16-year-old Spaniard Tommy Rohredo 6-3, 7-6 (8-6) in an hour and 28 minutes.

Martin will face another Spaniard, Alberto Berasategui, in his quarterfinal match. Berasategui beat Argentine Franco Squillari 6-0, 7-6 (7-1).

Spain's Francisco Clavet defeated Briton Tim Henman 6-1, 6-4 and moved on to face Brazil's Fernando Meligeni, who beat Moroccan Younis El Anayoui 3-6, 7-6 (7-4) 6-1.

Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre Cinema Theatre

CINEMA TEL:463-4144

PHILADELPHIA '1'

Steven Spielberg's

ANTZ

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:15

SAVING

PRIVATE RYAN

Show: 9:30

CINEMA TEL:463-4144

PHILADELPHIA '2'

Sophie Marceau ... in Leo Tolstoy's

ANNA

KARENINA

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:5699238

PLAZA

Leonardo Di Caprio ... in

TITANIC

Shows: 12:15, 3:30, 6:45, 9:45

CINEMA TEL:5677420

CONCORDE

ALWAD MAHROUS

BTA' AL WAZIR

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CONCORDE 2

DIS CLOSURE

CINEMA TEL:5934793

GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN

www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

Julia Roberts ... in

STEPMOM

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

THE MAGIC SWORD

Thursday and Friday mornings

CINEMA TEL:5934793

GALLERIA 2

ABDOUN

www.cns.com.jo/Galleria

Tom Hanks & Meg Ryan ... in

YOU'VE GOT M@IL

Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45

RUSH HOUR

Shows: 5:00 p.m. only

Hisham Yanes Theatre

TEL: 4625155

The political satire

AL SALAM AL

Starting at 8:30 p.m.

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE

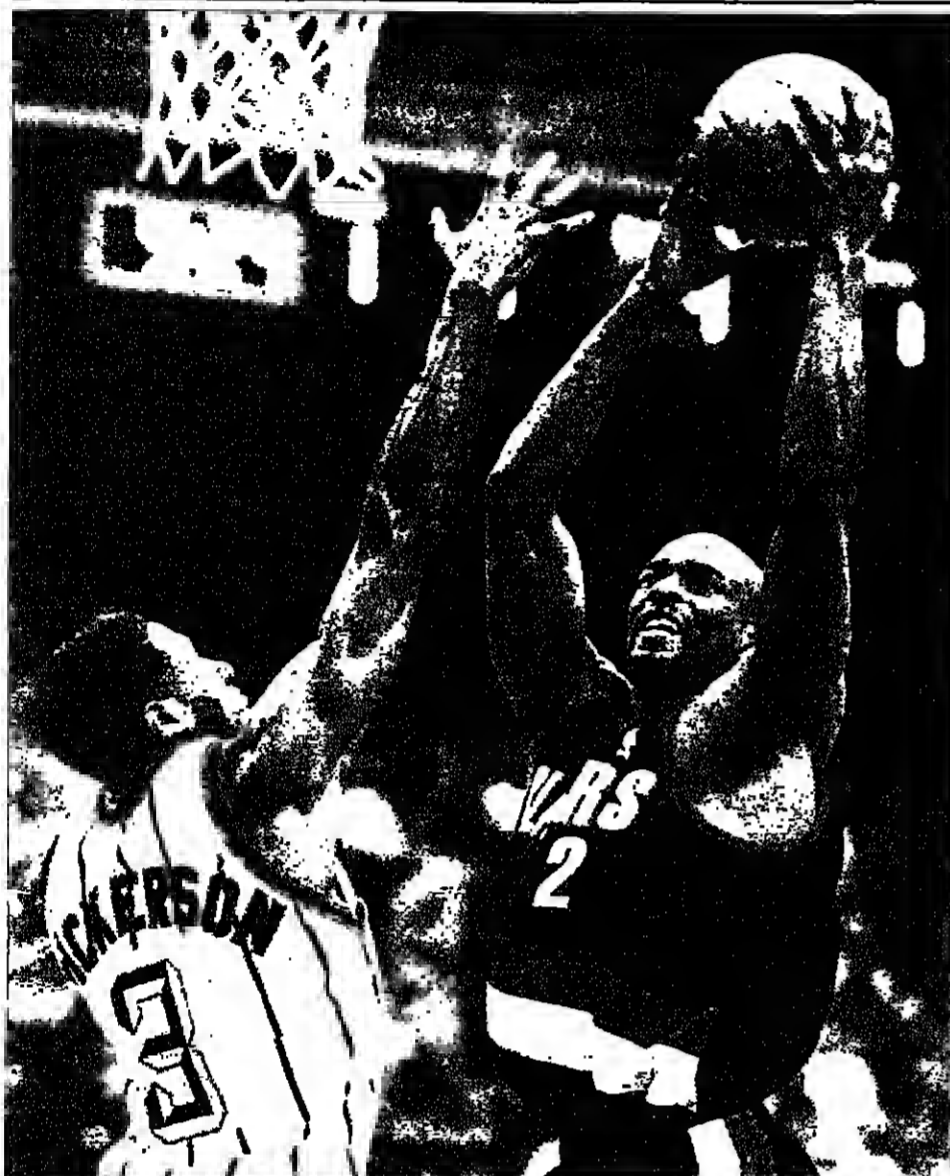
Jordan wins three medals

AMMAN — Jordan's Mohammad Ya'qoub has won the silver medal at the 11th Tehran International Taekwondo Championship in the 54-58 kilograms category, while Yasser Abu Sha'ib won the bronze. On Wednesday Mohammad Fala'h won the gold after he defeated his Iranian counterpart 4-0. In the 72-78kg. and 58-62kg. categories of the preliminary round, Mohammad Farajeh was to conclude Jordan's participation playing against his Tajikistani counterparts, while Iyad Saifi played against his Armenian counterpart in the 58-62kg. category of the same round. The team will head back to Amman on Saturday after taking part in the event as part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games — Al Hussein

Tournament. The Kingdom competed alongside teams from Korea, Taiwan, Egypt, Morocco, Turkey, Iran and other countries.

Arab Military Games to be held in Cairo

AMMAN — The General Assembly of the Arab Union for Military Sports has decided to hold the First Pan-Arab Games in Cairo by the end of this year. The tournament will only include five games; handball, football, boxing, orientation and marathon. Meanwhile, Jordan will participate in Arab Athletics Championship, which will be held in Lebanon in June and is part of preparations for the Pan-Arab Games.



Stacey Augmon of the Portland Trailblazers (R) shoots over Houston Rockets Michael Dickerson (L) during the first half of play at Compaq Center in Houston, Texas. The Rockets beat the Blazers 86-76 (AFP photo)

Pippen powers Rockets past Blazers

HOUSTON (R) — Scottie Pippen scored a season-high 31 points and led a strong defensive effort in the fourth quarter to help the Houston Rockets earn a pivotal 86-76 victory Thursday over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Pippen had two of his three blocked shots in the fourth quarter, when the Rockets held Portland to a dismal 3-of-15 from the field. The Blazers were outscored 23-12 in the period, recording their lowest-scoring quarter of the season.

"I just came out and played a little more aggressive tonight," said Pippen, who also had seven rebounds and tied a career high with six 3-pointers.

The Blazers, at least temporarily, lost their claim as the NBA's top team. They fell to 29-9 and dropped a game behind Utah, which is playing the Los Angeles Clippers.

"I'll put this one up as our best win of the year, period," said Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich.

Said Blazers guard Damon Stoudamire: "Scottie stepped up for them tonight. He's been there before. He knows how big these games are down the stretch, and he stepped up for them." Charles Barkley also was big defensively and nearly had a triple-double with 20 points, 12 rebounds and nine assists.

"This is as well as we have played for all four quarters this year," Barkley said. "We didn't give them any easy baskets and that's what they thrive on. They're not as good in their half-court offence," since suffering their worst loss of the season — a 111-71 set-

back in Portland on March 7 — the Rockets have won both meetings between the teams. Houston has inched within one-half game of third-place San Antonio in the Western Conference.

In Los Angeles, Greg Ostertag recorded season highs with 16 points and 19 rebounds as the Utah Jazz took over the league's best record and avenged a humiliating defeat with a 103-89 victory over the Los Angeles Clippers.

Karl Malone scored 25 points and John Stockton added 19 and nine assists, helping Utah (30-8) move a game in front of Portland (29-9) for the NBA's top record.

"It would be great if it were the last game, but we've got (12) more games to play," Stockton said of having the league's best record. "I just hope we're there when we're now." The Jazz ran their win streak to a season-high nine games.

The current roll comes after back-to-back defeats, the first of which was a 103-77 loss to the league-worst Clippers.

In Sacramento, Hersey Hawkins' 3-pointer as time expired in overtime capped a wild finish as the Seattle SuperSonics outlasted the Sacramento Kings 99-98 for a crucial win in the hunt for the final Western Conference playoff spot.

With his team trailing 98-96 and 7.3 seconds left, Gary Payton dribbled down the right sideline and found Hawkins alone in the right corner.

Hawkins, who finished with 15 points, released the ball just before the buzzer sounded and hit nothing but net as the Sonics

increased their lead for the final post season spot in the West to 2 1/2 games over Sacramento.

Detlef Schrempf collected 19 points for Seattle.

Chris Webber had 26 points and 21 boards for the Kings, but missed the first of two free throws to set up the Hawks' winning shot.

In Dallas, Michael Finley scored a season-high 34 points as the Dallas Mavericks beat the Minnesota Timberwolves, who missed star forward Kevin Garnett, 101-95.

Finley, who was 11-of-16 from the field and 9-of-9 at the foul line, scored 14 points in the fourth quarter to help Dallas hold off a late run by the Timberwolves.

"Finley was sensational," Dallas coach Don Nelson said.

"They couldn't guard him. He was really good. He carried U.S." Garnett, Minnesota's leading scorer and rebounder, missed his second straight game with the flu.

In Oakland, Terry Cummings scored 10 of his 14 points in the fourth quarter as the Golden State Warriors defeated the Denver Nuggets for the second time in four days 85-79.

John Starks finished with 16 points as the Warriors recorded their third straight win.

Danny Fortson collected 20 points and 23 rebounds and Antonio McDyess had 29 and 12 for the Nuggets.

Lakers end rocky relationship with Rodman

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Dennis Rodman's relationship with the Los Angeles Lakers proved even shorter than his rocky marriage to actress Carmen Electra.

The flamboyant forward was released by the Lakers Thursday night after less than two months with the National Basketball Association club. The move came nine days after Rodman's wife, Electra, filed for divorce less than six months after their Las Vegas wedding.

"At this time, we feel it's in the best interests of the Lakers to end the relationship," Lakers vice president Jerry West said in a statement. "This obviously didn't work out like we had hoped, but we would like to thank Dennis for the contributions he did make to the team and wish him the best of luck in the future."

Luck has not followed Rodman or the Lakers recently.

Rodman signed a free-agent deal with Los Angeles on Feb. 23 and the Lakers won the first nine games with him in uniform. But the situation turned sour when the 37-year-old took a leave of absence on March 14 that kept him away from the team for four games as he dealt with unspecified personal problems.

Rodman also typically has been late or absent for numerous practices. When he showed up late Thursday, coach Kurt Rambis sent him home. West issued his statement sometime later.

The Lakers struggled recently with him in the lineup, losing four of their last seven games and falling to fifth place in the Western Conference.

A member of five NBA championship teams, including the last three with the Chicago Bulls, Rodman led the league in rebounding the previous seven seasons.

Abu Samra wins RACJ Gauloises National Rally

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Ma'rouf Abu Samra Friday led in 10 out of 11 special stages to win the Gauloises Spring National Rally, the inaugural rally of the 1999 season, organised by the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ).

Abu Samra and co-driver Amjad Al Shamaileh drove their Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution to victory leaving Bashar Bustami and co-driver Raffi Bilenjian in second place while Mohammad Al Daoud and Khaled Zakaria came in third.

Bustami, in another Mitsubishi, led the first special stage but Abu Samra took control from then on leading the 11 starters in the 286-kilometre event.

Fifteen drivers had initially registered to take part in the national rally which included 81 kilometres of 11 special stages in areas close to the capital which have been assigned to draw more spectators.

Only seven cars finished the rally which set out from RACJ driving through Yajouz, Abu Nusair, Ruman, Slehi, Kassarat, Iraq Al Amir, the Dead Sea, Mushaggar, Mousa Springs, Siyagha and Na'our.

Jordan Drivers Open champion in 1996 and 1998 Ahmad Daoud, went out after gear trouble in the second special stage while his elder brother 1997 champion

Mohammad Daoud, representing the Gauloises team, remained among top three positions almost throughout.

For RACJ officials and Jordanian drivers, the rally is considered as a serious practice for the first day of the 17th Jordan International Rally — one of the most prestigious sports events on the Kingdom's sports calendar scheduled for May 13-14.

RACJ Wednesday unveiled a three-year sponsorship agreement with the French firm Seita that will cover auto sports events in the Kingdom until the year 2001.

Seita which markets the cigarette brands of Gauloises and Gitanes will sponsor five rallies and eight carting events as well as the Ruman Hill Climb and other events on the RACJ calendar.

Gauloises, which entered the Jordanian market in 1998, is a main sponsor of auto sports worldwide, especially Formula 1 events.

Gauloises will fully sponsor a team of six competitors in the Carling Championship as well as one driver, Mohammad Al Daoud and co-driver Khaled Zakaria in a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution, in the rallies.

The Jordan Rally will be the second leg of the Middle East Rally Championship after the inaugural UAE Rally won by Mohammad Ben Sulayem.

Last year's champion Ben Sulayem of the United Arab

Emirates (UAE), eight times winner of the Jordan Rally title, will be competing in the Jordan International Rally, as well as last year's runner up Cypriot Andreas Tsouloftas and third place finisher Australia's Ron Cremen.

With co-driver Ronan Morgan, 10-time Middle East champion Ben Sulayem last year dominated the two-day 23-stage rally for the third consecutive year.

Jordan's top competitor was Ahmad Al Daoud and partner Malek Hariri who came in fourth overall as only fifteen out of 29 starters finished the rally including seven Jordanians.

Asphalt roads form the first day's stages while the second day's desert tracks prove to be the ultimate test of experience, stamina and well-maintained and sponsored teams.

No Jordanian has won the rally since it started in 1981.

The best Jordanian showing was third place finishes by Ziyad Bustami in 1981. His Majesty King Abdullah in 1986 and 1988; Hani Bisharat in 1987. Amjad Farrah in 1993, and Ma'rouf Abu Samra in 1995.

Saudi Arabia aim for 3rd Asian Cup Winners Cup victory

TOKYO (AFP) — Al Ittihad, aiming to bring Saudi Arabia their third straight Asian Cup Winners' Cup title, beat Al Talaba of Iraq 3-1 in the semi-finals here on Friday.

Defender Mohammed Al Sahafi opened the scoring in the 20th minute with striker Dalian Atkinson making it 2-0 six minutes later.

The Iraqi side hit back in the 36th minute with a goal through Qahtan O Drain. But Saudi substitute Ahmed Bahja put the Saudis further ahead with a goal in the last minute of the match.

Al Ittihad will face Chunam Dragons in Sunday's final after the South Koreans beat J-League champions Kashima Antlers 4-1 in the other semi-final match.

Saudi Arabia have taken the title for the past two years through Al Hilal and Al Nasr.



Fahad Khateeb (R, #8) of Saudi Arabia's Al-Ittihad heads the ball for the assist of Al-Ittihad's second goal, while Iraq's Talaba defender Wahab Labed (L, #25) looks on during the first half of the semi final of Asian Cup Winners' Cup football tournament in Tokyo Friday (AFP photo)

Real ready to snap up Zidane

MADRID (AFP) — Troubled Spanish giants Real Madrid are ready to snap up World Footballer of the Year Zinedine Zidane if he quits Juventus admitted club president Lorenzo Sanz on Friday.

"We would love to have Zidane," said Sanz. "I know that his wife comes from Almeria (southern Spain) and he has expressed his wish to come and play in the League at the end of his contract with Juventus."

Real coach John Toshack has already warned that there could well be a clear-out after what has been disastrous season for the Spanish giants and Zidane could be just the sort of player he could use to take his side back to the top.

The deposed European Cup holders awful season reached rock bottom last weekend with a humiliating 5-1 defeat by Celta Vigo. They are now fifth in the league, 10 points behind league leaders Barcelona.

Zidane admitted on Thursday he was not happy in Turin and wanted to move to Barcelona, Real Madrid or Atletico Madrid when he eventually parts company with the Italian champions.

Meanwhile, Joan Gaspart vice-president of Spanish league leaders Barcelona said he was not interested in signing Zidane.

"It's always very flattering when a great player says he wants to join Barca. But without wishing to offend Zidane, the best strikers in the world are already here."

The 26-year-old is under contract with Juventus until 2004 but friends of the player say there is no way he will remain with the Italian side for another four years.

"Juventus have shown that they can win the big matches but my wife, my family and my lifestyle count more than my job," said Zidane.

Zidane is also believed to be unhappy with the tactics used by new coach Carlo Ancelotti.

Fences fear raised after Villa Park invasion

LONDON (AFP) — Relatives of the Hillsborough disaster victims fear the pitch invasion following Manchester United's FA Cup victory over Arsenal could lead to the return of perimeter fences.

Several hundred fans, mostly United supporters, ran onto the Villa Park pitch following the 2-1 win in the semi-final replay on Wednesday.

Villa's head of security, John Hood, accused United fans of being the worst behaved in the country and the Hillsborough Families Support Group have appealed to supporters to think before they act.

"I am absolutely fed up with the behaviour of United's supporters," said Hood. "They created the risk of a major incident."

"I would have thought they would have shown more sense, particularly at this time. They were a disgrace."

Phil Hammond, secretary of the families support group, said: "We can't have people running onto the pitch because someone like (European body) UEFA might then turn round and tell clubs they must put the fences back up."

"That is the last thing we want — to go back to those days after all the progress that's been made."

"The fans must realise that they only get their own clubs into trouble by their actions." United fans feel too much is being made of the incident and they have reacted angrily to Hood's accusations.

Andy Walsh, chairman of the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association (IMUSA), said: "Mr. Hood is

well over the top in his comments."

"Emotionally it was a very highly-charged game and whilst recognising that Mr. Hood has got his job to do, he's also got to understand that after one of the greatest FA Cup semi-final games ever and certainly one of the best goals ever scored in the FA Cup semi-finals, emotions run high."

"We don't condone people running on the pitch, but United fans should be congratulated that it was only a few hundred rather than a few thousand."

"There was not one reported incident of United fans baiting Arsenal fans and it was just a joyous outpouring of relief and celebration and should be seen as such."

The Football Association are investigating the behaviour of the United fans, but Walsh feels it would be unfair to single them out for punishment.

"There was not the same outcry when Everton fans invaded the pitch at the end of last season and we feel confident that the FA will see sense and reason," he said.

The Football Supporters' Association (FSA) backed IMUSA and they also felt Hood was out of order with his comments.

Chair Alison Pilling said: "If he's head of security, isn't his job to look after the safety of fans rather than moan about how they celebrate when their team scores and gets through to the FA Cup Final?"

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Bouteflika accepts Algerian presidency amid controversy

ALGIERS (AFP) — Abdelaziz Bouteflika on Friday accepted his election as Algeria's next president in a poll shunned at the last minute by six opposition candidates.

"Despite the manoeuvres aimed at disturbing voters and discrediting their choice in the eyes of international opinion, the Algerian people have made a clear choice and have democratically elected me to the presidency of the republic," he said in a statement.

Supporters in Algiers reacted to his acceptance speech by driving through the streets in flag-draped cars, honking their horns.

Bouteflika, 62, a fierce nationalist who was foreign minister under the hardline socialist rule of Colonel Houari Boumedienne (1965-78), enjoys wide backing within Algeria's military establishment and won a five-year term of office.

He will succeed President Liamine Zeroual, whose surprise announcement in September that he wished to cut short his mandate by nearly two years precipitated the election.

"In this moment of great emotion for me, I wish to

express my thanks to all the citizens who have given me their vote," said Bouteflika, who officially garnered 73 per cent of Thursday's vote, with official turnout at 60 per cent.

Bouteflika had said he would not accept the presidency without a "large majority" show of support from Algeria's 17.5 million voters.

"To those who made another choice, I wish to say that I pledge to be — in all impartiality and in all justice — the president of all Algerians," his statement said.

Bouteflika's six rivals stood down on Wednesday, the day before the vote, charging massive vote-rigging.

Earlier Friday, riot police cracked down to prevent a march called to protest Bouteflika's election in a vote considered constitutionally illegal by his rivals.

Riot police dispersed several hundred demonstrators who planned to hold a protest march in defiance of a ban pronounced late Thursday.

Demonstrators chanted "down with dictatorship" and "killer regime" as people looked on from apartment blocks, before riot police dispersed the protesters. About

25 were arrested.

The protest march had been called by the opposition Socialist Forces Front (FFS) of Hocine Ait Ahmed.

Also Friday, Ahmad Taleb Ibrahim, one of six candidates who withdrew on the eve of the election, called for a new election "as soon as possible."

"The president chosen has no popular legitimacy," he said on French television. "We want the Algerian president to be chosen by the Algerian people and not by three or four people."

He had told a press conference in Algiers: "If Abdelaziz Bouteflika takes office he will have no constitutional legitimacy."

Ibrahim also questioned the official turnout figure of 60 per cent, saying that real voter participation did not reach 25 per cent.

The ex-candidate said the last-minute action was forced by developments. "In the last three days before the election there was a change in the situation. Before, there were elements in the establishment that favoured neutrality. Then they all joined ranks behind Bouteflika," Ibrahim said.

Meanwhile, Algeria lashed

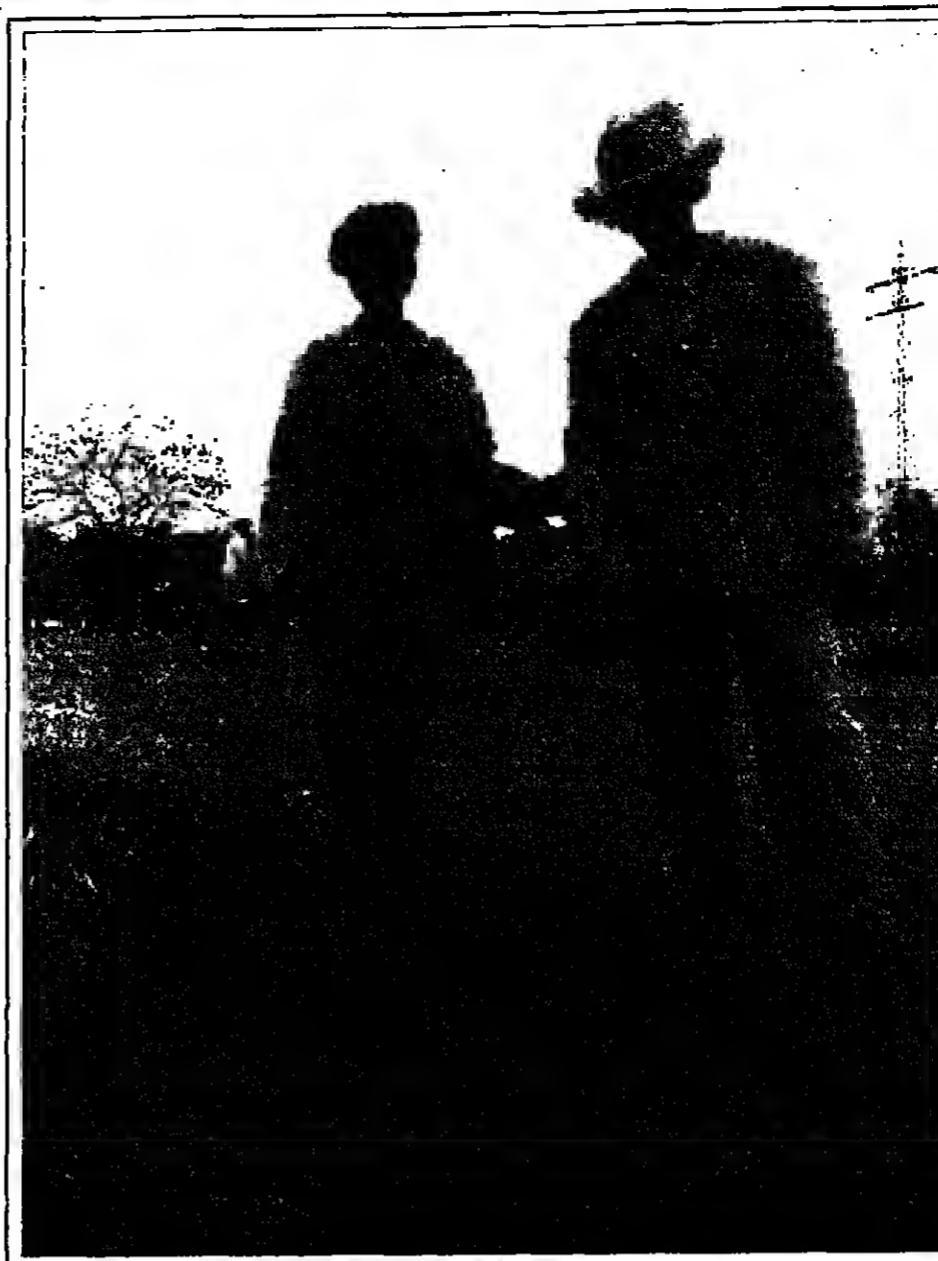
out at France for expressing concern over the "situation that has been created" by the presidential vote.

The French statement by foreign ministry spokeswoman Anne Gazeau-Secret was "unacceptable interference" in Algeria's internal affairs, her Algerian counterpart, Abdul Aziz Shaa, said in a statement carried by the official APS news agency.

Gazeau-Secret had said: "France continues to hope that the Algerian people's aspiration for democracy can find expression within a pluralist framework."

Zeroual's decision to cut short his mandate was thought to have been prompted by the military, a powerful institution which has played a key role in Algerian politics since independence from France in 1962.

With the credibility of Bouteflika's mandate in question, prospects remain dim that Algeria will soon pull out of an economic crisis coupled with civil strife that has claimed up to 100,000 lives, according to Western estimates, since 1992, when the military blocked electoral victory for the FIS.



GRASS FASHION: A couple dressed in grass-like matching suits on Friday stand over a flower bed on the opening day of the 'Gruen 99' (Green 99) garden festival. The festival opened its gates to the public in Well am Rhein, Germany, on Friday. The couple are part of the so-called 'silent events' that will be displayed together with seasonal flowers until Oct. 17 (Reuters photo)

Man convicted of sticking tongue out at neighbour

SYDNEY (AP) — A man who stuck his tongue out at his neighbour lost his appeal on Friday, over being fined for breaching an apprehended violence order. In the New South Wales supreme court, Justice Michael Adams found there was no doubt or question as to the guilt of Garry Bayliss. On June 17, 1997, Bayliss was fined 350 Australian dollars (\$220) after being convicted of breaching a court order taken out by his neighbour, Ronald Allen Bates, in August 1996. Bayliss had denied the breach, which alleged that on Oct. 31, 1996, he made an offensive gesture and poked his tongue out toward Bates.

Cough leads to wrong verdict

CARDIFF (AP) — When a juror coughed, defendant Alan Rashid had a right to feel sick. The cough came just as the jury foreman announced a verdict of "not guilty" in Rashid's trial on a charge of threatening homicide. The cough coincided with "not," Judge Michael Gibbon only heard "guilty" and Rashid was sentenced to two years in prison. As the jury left the court on Thursday, one inquisitive member of the panel asked an usher why Rashid was going to jail after being found innocent. So the jurors were herded back into court. "It was a very bizarre situation and I've never heard of it happening before," said Nicholas Williamson, the court manager.

Museum offers to buy star's implants

MIAMI (AP) — Ripley's Believe It or Not museum has offered to buy Pamela Anderson Lee's recently removed breast implants, curator Christine Barnes said on Friday. "We are interested in them for our Hollywood Museum. We are going to feature different practices from around the world as far as making yourself beautiful," Barnes explained. "We figured that they would make the implant display more interesting." Barnes added, Seeking a more "natural" look, former "Baywatch" star and ruling Internet sex queen Pamela Anderson Lee had her breast implants removed. Lee's spokeswoman, Marleah Leslie, told USA the buxom blonde star had "just wanted her body to go back to its natural state."

Norway's star surgeon dies

OSLO (AP) — Nikita, a celebrated surgeon given to Norway by former Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, has died in a tragic accident, a local newspaper reported Friday. The most famous denizen of Bergen aquarium died on Monday when salt water was accidentally pumped into his tank, the Bergensavisen said. Nikita had been brought to Norway by Khrushchev during an official visit in 1964 as a symbol of friendship between the two neighbouring countries. He was the only one of four Caspian surgeons to have survived the long and stressful trip. But he outlasted Khrushchev and his three successors as Soviet leaders, as well as the Soviet Union itself and the Cold War. Two North American surgeons who shared his tank survived the accident.

Man lifts beer keg with his beard

VILNIUS (R) — A Lithuanian brewer put his 32-cm long beard to good use when he lifted a 41-kg barrel of his own homemade beer, the daily Lietuvos Rytas reported on Friday. Antanas Kontimas, from the western town of Telshiai, was already well-known in the small Baltic state for having Lithuania's longest beard. The paper said that Kontimas steered himself for the challenge by downing a pint of beer beforehand.

NEWS IN BRIEF

King receives cables on Hijra new year

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Friday received cables of congratulations on the Hijra new year from heads of Arab and Islamic states, including Sultan Qaboos of Oman, Syrian President Hafez Assad, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Tunisian President Zaid Al Abidine Ben Ali, UAE President Sheikh Zayed Al Nahayan, Algerian President Liamine Zeroual, Qatari Emir Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Gambian President Yahya Jammeh and Brunei Sultan Haji Hassan Bulquiah. King Abdullah also received cables of congratulations from a number of senior Jordanian officials.

King confers medals on retired officers

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Thursday visited the Armed Forces headquarters, where he was received by Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Miri' Kaabneh and senior officers. King Abdullah and Kaabneh discussed issues of concern to the Armed Forces. King Abdullah also conferred Royal medal upon a number of officers who were retired recently for their efforts in serving the Armed Forces. Also on Thursday, the King visited Hamzeh Ben Al Mutaleb Brigade, where he was briefed on the unit's duties and activities.

Russia's U.N. envoy boycotts Butler

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Russia's U.N. Ambassador Sergei Lavrov boycotted a meeting Thursday with Iraqi arms inspector Richard Butler, who presented the U.N. Security Council with a new report on disarmament, which Lavrov refused to discuss. A discussion on the report by the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) to monitor Iraq's disarmament is a "waste of time," Lavrov stated, noting that inspectors have not been in the country since December. "I mentioned that we will not be participating in the discussions of UNSCOM and IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] reports, for the simple reason that these reports do not add anything new to the Security Council's work in Iraq," Lavrov told reporters. Russia believes the Australian diplomat is directly responsible for the December bombing of Iraq by U.S. and British forces.

Palestinians pray on seized land

RAFAH (AFP) — Hundreds of Palestinians gathered in the southern Gaza Strip to say Friday prayers at a site which settlers from nearby Jewish enclaves had attempted to seize two days before, witnesses said. Some 350 Muslim faithful prayed on the 16-hectare area near the settlement of Morag near Rafah which had been fenced in by settlers and planted with hundreds of olive trees, they said. The prayers were observed from some distance away by a large force of Israeli soldiers and about 50 settlers but neither group intervened when worshippers uprooted the trees. "I was surprised when dozens of settlers came here at night the day before yesterday and started planting trees on my land. I tried to resist but they were guarded by soldiers who threw me off," Mahmoud Al Dahir, who owns six hectares at the site, told AFP. "I won't leave again even if it costs me my life." Al Dahir vowed near a tent set up by Palestinian protesters who intend to remain on the site. Palestinian liaison officer Khaled Abu Al Ala said a protest had been lodged with the Israeli army about the alleged settler violations but that he had not yet received a reply.

'PKK rebels kill five Turk soldiers'

TUNCALI (R) — Kurdish rebels killed five Turkish soldiers and wounded 10 in an ambush in eastern Turkey on Friday, an army official said. He said guerrillas loyal to captured Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan attacked soldiers returning to barracks near the village of Akuluk, some 20 km west of the town of Tunceli. A number of PKK rebels were killed in the ensuing fire fight, but it was not yet clear how many, the official said. Troops backed by U.S.-made Super Cobra strike helicopters have mounted an operation to track down the group of around 20 guerrillas who were hiding in a heavily wooded mountainous area near the site of the ambush, the official said.

Netanyahu probed over bribery charges

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli police questioned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday over allegations of bribery that emerged last month involving his foreign minister, Ariel Sharon. "Investigators took the prime minister's testimony regarding this case," said police spokeswoman Linda Menulim, without elaborating. The investigation centres on allegations that Sharon granted favours to a general-turned-businessman, Avigdor Ben Gal, to change his testimony in a libel case filed by the minister against the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

Israelis debate role for Shas leader Deri

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli politicians were in a quandary on Friday over whether a key powerbroker should still be allowed to influence the shape of Israeli government after being ordered to jail for corruption.

Arieh Deri, leader of the ultra-Orthodox Sephardic party Shas and a close ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was sentenced to four years in jail Thursday for corruption, but will remain free pending an appeal expected to last months.

In the meantime, a defiant Deri has vowed to lead Shas into general elections May 17, when many analysts believe the party will increase its 10-seat holding in the 120-member parliament — in part because of their chief's legal plight.

Already the third biggest party in Israel after the Labour Party of Ehud Barak and Netanyahu's rightist Likud bloc, Shas — and Deri — look certain to hold a key voice in post-election negotiations on the next coalition government.

The situation is unprecedented in Israel and while many politicians demanded Deri quit politics, the three main candidates for prime minister in May — Netanyahu, Barak and Centre Party head Yitzhak Mordechai — distinguished themselves by their silence on the matter.

The three leaders — who need the support of Shas voters to win election and could rely on an alliance with Shas in order to govern — issued nearly identical statements recognising the court's legitimacy in convicting and sentencing Deri.

But, clearly anxious not to alienate the Shas electorate, they each noted Deri also had the right to appeal and left the door wide open to cooperating with him after the elections.

In contrast, some lower level

politicians from all three men's parties insisted Deri quit politics.

"A man condemned for corruption cannot lead a party or play a role in political life," said the Labour Party's Uzi Baram. "It would not be right to conduct negotiations with Deri," added Mordechai's deputy, Amnon Lipkin-Shahak.

Attorney General Eliyahu Rubinstein for his part, lashed out at "political leaders who treat Deri like an associate in future coalition negotiations."

"This is like the silence of the lambs," he said.

Israel's biggest circulation newspaper, the Yediot Aharanot, also denounced the opportunistic stance of key politicians in a lead editorial titled simply, "Cowards."

"The Deri affair is a test of the courage of our political leaders... but until now none have said loud and clear that someone found guilty of such serious crimes in a court of law can no longer play an active role on the political stage," Yediot said.

Deri was convicted of taking more than \$150,000 in bribes between 1985 and 1990 when he was director general and then minister at the interior ministry — the first minister in Israel's history to be convicted of bribe-taking.

In handing down the jail sentence against Deri, a three-member panel of judges said his crime was "dishonourable" — meaning under Israeli law that he will not be able to serve as a government minister for 10 years.

But the law allows Deri to run for parliament and even serve as a lawmaker from his prison cell.

Most Israeli commentators said Friday that they believe the tactic will succeed in widening Shas' presence in parliament — and its leverage over the next government, no matter who is prime minister.

Internal document warns against Israeli annexation of West Bank

TEL AVIV (AP) — The Israeli government has been told by a legal advisor that annexing parts of the West Bank would be rejected by most of the world and would be seen as a violation of international law, an official confirmed on Friday.

Israel has threatened to annex territory in the West Bank if Palestinian President Yasser Arafat unilaterally declares statehood on May 4, the end of the five-year interim period of autonomy.

The 60-page report by Foreign Ministry Legal Advisor Alan Baker examines legal consequences of the end of the interim period, said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Baker said the best solution is to extend the interim period by

agreement, said the official, confirming a report in the Haaretz daily. Baker said Israeli annexation might trigger Palestinian violence.

Annexation would not be recognised by most of the world and would probably be seen as a violation of international law, Baker said.

David Bar-Ilan, a senior advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, rejected Baker's advice, saying Israel's claim to the West Bank "is better than anyone else's."

Joel Singer, a former foreign ministry legal adviser who helped formulate the autonomy agreements, backed Netanyahu's position.

Singer wrote in a recent article that while five-year interim period expires May 4, the two sides

commitment to negotiate the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, rather than take unilateral actions, is open-ended.

A unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood would be a flagrant violation of the autonomy accords and would enable Israel to take countermeasures, such as annexation, Singer said.

Arafat has signalled that he is ready to extend the interim period, but a final decision will be made only April 27 when a senior PLO body, the Palestinian Central Council, meets in the Gaza Strip to discuss the statehood issue.

It is widely believed that a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood would help Israel's hardline prime minister win reelection May 17.

Barak widens poll lead over Netanyahu

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Barely a month ahead of Israeli general elections, Labour Party chief Ehud Barak widened his lead in opinion polls Friday over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

But the number of undecided voters remained high and analysts warned it was too early to count Netanyahu, a master campaigner, out of the race for reelection.

In a survey conducted by the Gallup polling institute for the Maariv newspaper, Barak was credited with 48 per cent of the vote in a straight run-off with Netanyahu, to 41 per cent for the incumbent. Eleven per cent of voters were undecided.

This was Barak's biggest lead over Netanyahu in a Gallup poll since early elections were called in

December. In a similar survey published last week by Maariv, Barak had only a three per cent lead — less than the poll's 4.5 per cent margin of error.

In a second poll published by the rival Yediot Aharanot newspaper, Barak had a five-point advance over Netanyahu — 47 per cent to 42 per cent, again with 11 per cent of the electorate undecided.

Barak and Netanyahu lead a field of five candidates who will compete for the prime ministership on May 17. If, as seems likely, no one wins more than 50 per cent of the vote, the two leading contenders will hold a run-off on June 1.

The Yediot Aharanot poll of voter intentions for the first round found Barak leading

Netanyahu 34 per cent to 33 per cent, with Centre Party leader Yitzhak Mordechai, a former Netanyahu ally, garnering 17 per cent, far-right candidate Benny Begin four per cent and Azmi Bishara, an Arab Israeli, three per cent.

Nine per cent of respondents were undecided.

It was the first opinion poll of the campaign to put Barak ahead of Netanyahu in the first round of voting.

The surveys were conducted following a first television campaign debate between Netanyahu and Mordechai on Tuesday in which Barak refused to participate.

The debate was marked by a sharp personal assault on the prime minister by Mordechai, whom Netanyahu fired as defence minister in January.

Britain, Russia propose rival inspection plans for Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — The U.N. Security Council on Friday was to look at rival initiatives for resuming "reinforced" U.N. weapons inspections in Iraq proposed by Britain and Russia.

The Russian plan calls for the lifting of U.N.-sponsored international sanctions on Iraq, while the British proposal would keep the sanctions in place but allow Iraq to sell all the crude oil it wants.

Debate on the two draft resolutions by the 15-member Security Council is expected to begin Friday, as part of the United Nations' attempt to reshape relations with Iraq since U.S.-British air strikes began in December. U.S. inspectors in charge of monitoring the destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction left Iraq under pressure a day before the bombing campaign began on Dec. 15. Baghdad has refused to allow the

resumption of weapons inspections unless the U.N. lifts the international embargo imposed on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Since the U.N. inspectors left Iraq, several governments have voiced concern that Baghdad might return to building weapons of mass destruction.

Russia's plan calls for a "reinforced" programme of control and verification to ensure that Iraq does not rebuild an arsenal of biological, chemical, nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. To entice Baghdad's compliance, the Russians propose lifting non-military sanctions which have caused so much hardship to 22 million Iraqis.

A joint British-Dutch proposal would replace the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) — set up in 1991 to monitor Iraqi disarmament — with a "Commission on Investigation,

Inspection and Monitoring (UNCIMM)."

The new inspection regime would be "a reinforced system of ongoing monitoring and verification" capable of carrying out "intrusive inspections," the draft resolution said.

Under the plan, Iraq would give UNCIMM inspectors "immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access" to any site or government official in Iraq.

UNCIMM inspectors inherit UNSCOM's archives and experts with the exception of its director Richard Butler, who has already announced he will step down when his two-year mandate expires in June. An UNCIMM director would be appointed by July 1 at the latest, the draft resolution said.

The proposal stressed that while "conditions do not exist" for the lifting of U.N. sanctions on Iraq, the \$5.2

billion limit place on Iraq's crude oil exports could be eliminated to improve the living conditions of the Iraqi people.

The fall of international crude oil prices, and the significant damage U.S. and British bombs have inflicted on Iraq's oil installations make even the present dollar limit set on Iraqi oil exports unattainable.

Diplomats here predicted the debate on the two proposals could last several weeks while the council draws its lines of support.

The United States is strongly opposed to lifting the sanctions on Iraq and might have reservations about scrapping UNSCOM, the diplomats said. China and France, who in January called for removing the sanctions and imposing a reinforced inspections programme on Iraq, should back Moscow's latest initiative.

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